

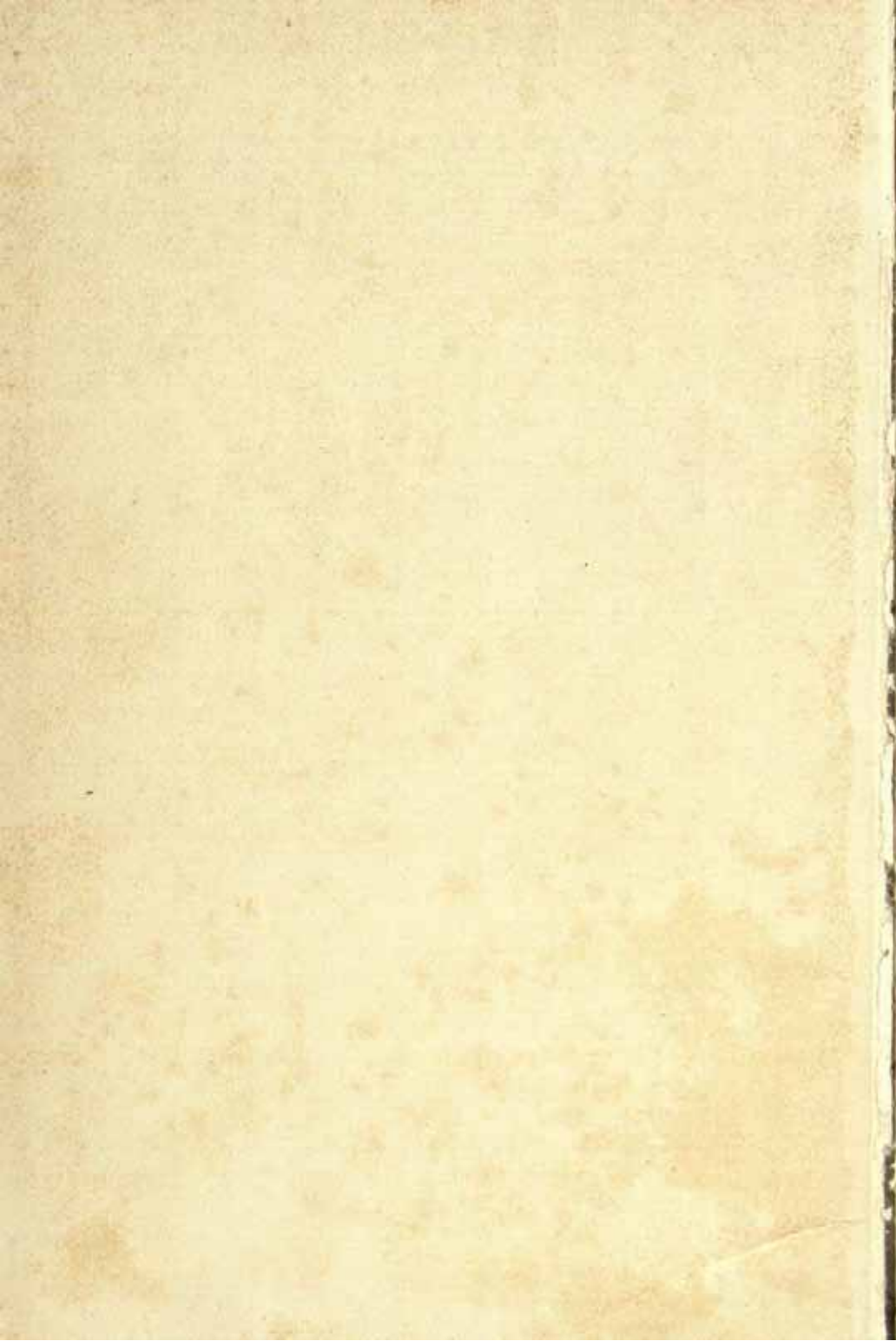
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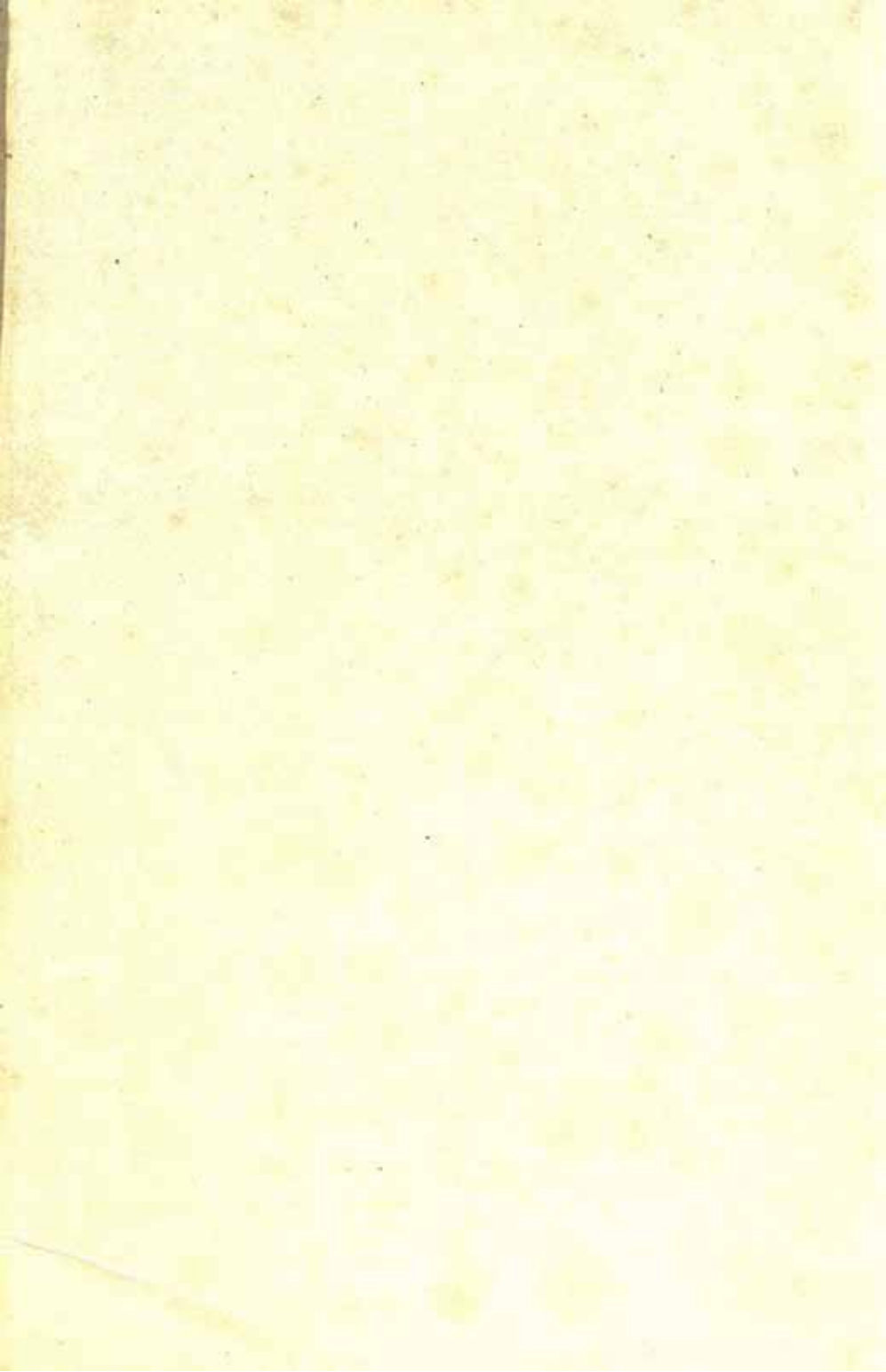
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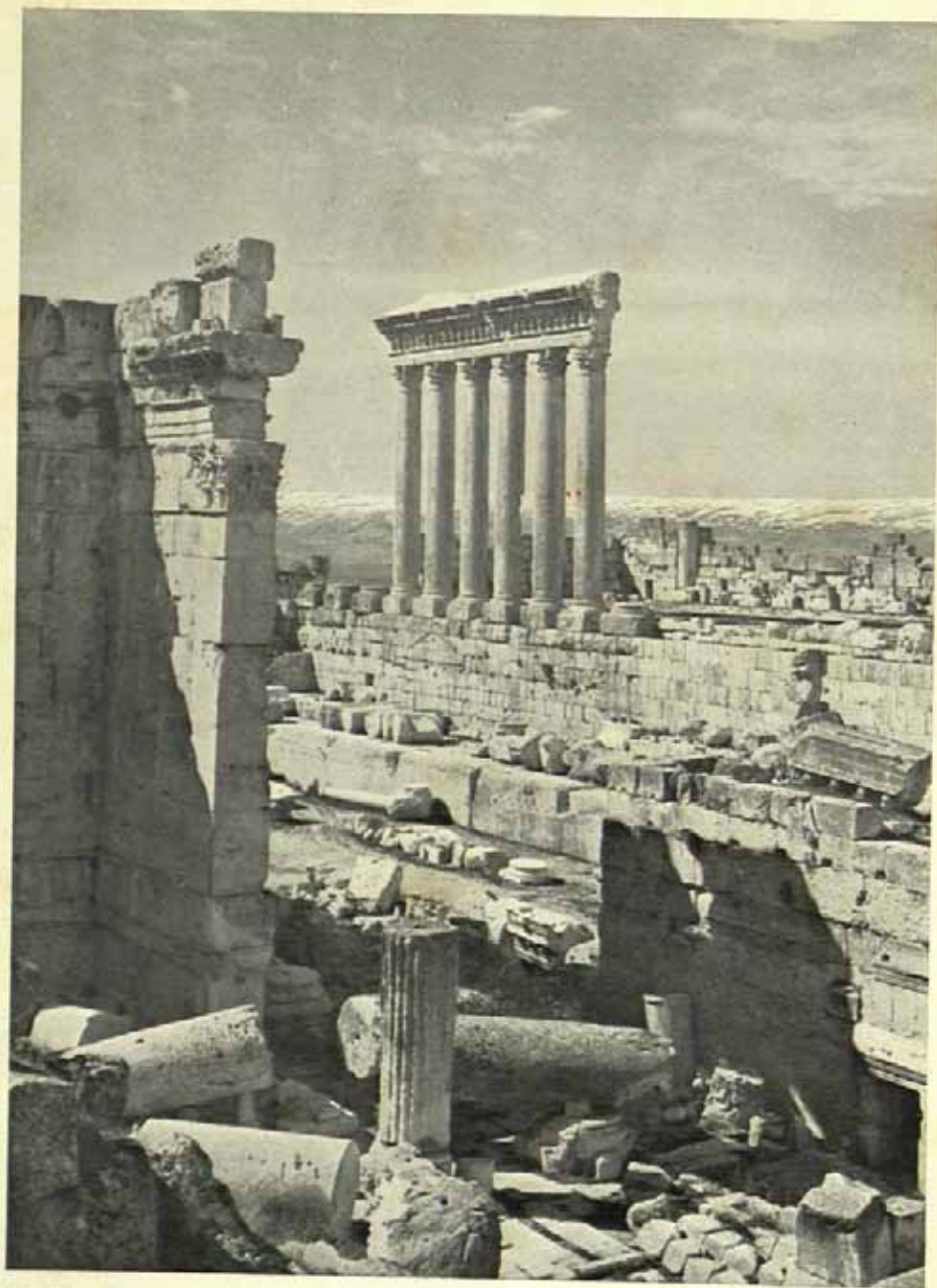
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Looking towards the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbek: an unusually fine example of the Greco-Roman architecture in the Near East.

# ADVENTURES IN THE NEAREST EAST

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Cyrus H. Gordon

FOREWORD BY O. G. S. CRAWFORD,  
C.B.E., LITT.D., F.B.A.

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# Foreword

by O. G. S. Crawford, C.B.E., Litt.D., F.B.A.

A FOREWORD is rather like the opening address of a Chairman introducing a lecturer to the meeting. The Chairman need not himself be well versed in the subject of the lecture; nor need the writer of a Foreword be one who could write a book on the subject himself. That must be my excuse for consenting, very willingly, to write a Foreword for Professor Cyrus Gordon's fascinating book. I am no orientalist, but I am keenly interested in the history and religions of the Orient; and I have read this book with avidity because it tells me, in plain but scholarly language, just what I want to know about it. The book is written for those who thirst after knowledge but for whom learned publications are neither accessible nor, as a rule, intelligible. It deals with field-work and excavation in Palestine and Mesopotamia, with art and religion, and with those remarkable Early Christians, the Coptic monks and hermits, who, in an age not unlike our own, retired from the world and lived a simple life in the desert. And it ends with a most original chapter on Magic.

There are today many books which cater for the growing popular interest in archaeology and ancient history; but not many of them are by scholars who, like Professor Gordon, are philologists and able to read the ancient scripts. It is most refreshing to read a book like this by one who is interested in the content and not merely the form of those documents, and has the gift of conveying his enthusiasm to his readers. That comes of having a well stocked mind which sees the past in the present and *vice versa*, and can make illuminating comparisons between them.

Many books profess to deal with what is called 'the Bible and archaeology', not always without bias. Professor Gordon explicitly disavows any claim that archaeology can 'prove' or 'disprove' the Bible. But as he says - and shows abundantly throughout this book - 'archaeological discoveries coming from the world in which the Scriptures were written indisputably add to the sum total of our knowledge of that world and give us perspective as well as more individual facts'. No archaeological

discoveries have done this more fully than those of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) to which Chapter 7 is devoted; this is a fact which for various reasons has not yet been fully appreciated. Ugarit and its language are Professor Gordon's particular speciality; what he has to say about the most important documents found there by Professor Schaeffer is pregnant with far-reaching implications for religious history.

Perhaps I should add that the earlier chapters, giving his own adventures in the field, are full of entertainment of a lighter kind. The author is no mere arm-chair archaeologist – or perhaps I should say he is not only that, for arm-chair work is as necessary as field work, of which it is the complement.

So here is a book with something good in it for everyone.

O. G. S. Crawford

28 November, 1956.

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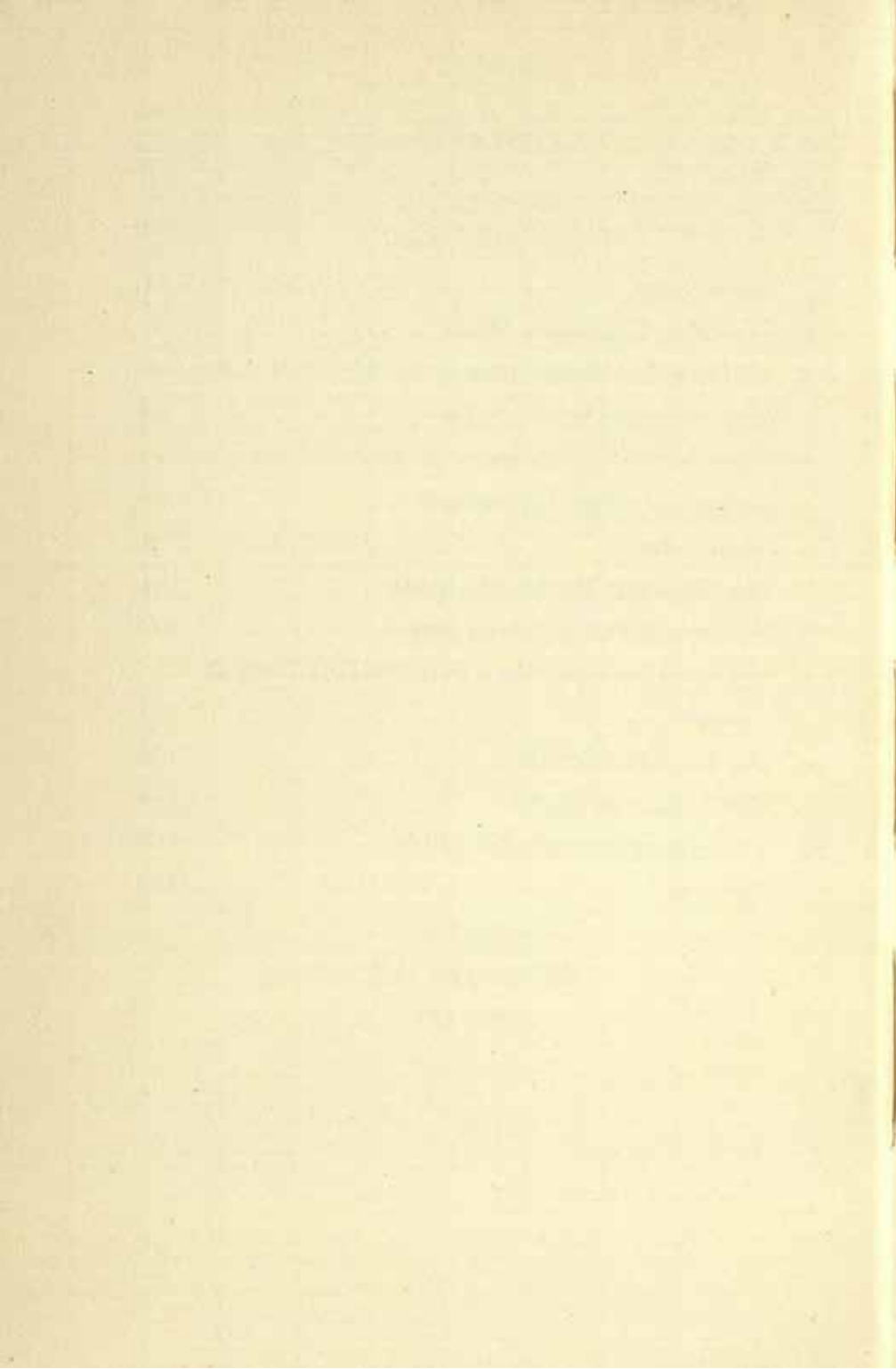
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# Introduction

NEAR EAST DISCOVERY is full of surprises. The Ugaritic tablets are dispelling much of the darkness that has enveloped the origins of Greek and Hebrew classics. That Homeric epic and the earliest Hebrew poetry were the results of long and rich developments should have been apparent to anyone who realizes that artistic perfection is never created *ex nihilo*. But Ugarit, straddling the Canaanite and Mycenaean spheres, provides not only the mellow East Mediterranean literary traditions underlying Greek and Hebrew literatures, but explains the bonds that link the earliest Greek and Hebrew classics.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to 1953, when M. Ventris first published his decipherment of the 'Linear B' tablets from Crete and Greece, showing that they were Greek, everyone assumed that Hebrew was recorded in writing before Greek. But now, to the contrary, we are reading Linear B Greek texts, written before the birth of Abraham (let alone before the date of any known Hebrew text).<sup>2</sup>

ABC tablets used by the scribes at Ugarit consistently list the letters in the order that they appear in the Hebrew or Phoenician alphabet, borrowed by the Greeks, transmitted to the Romans, and so to us.<sup>3</sup> Who would have ventured to predict that our system of writing would be attested at Ugarit by the early fourteenth century B.C.?

While Ugarit is revolutionizing the problem of Old Testament origins, the Dead Sea scrolls are doing the same for the New Testament. How fortunate is this generation to live at a time when the sources of our culture—sacred and profane—are illuminated in a brighter light of history than our forefathers imagined possible! It is ours, if only we so desire, to understand more accurately and fully the classics against the background of their authentic antiquity now emerging from the mounds and caves of the Near East.

Also, more prosaic aspects of our life, such as business methods, can often be traced to the Near East. The ancient inhabitants of Babylonia used the word *qaqqadum*, 'head', in the sense of 'principal' (as distinct from 'interest') or 'capital'. Mesopotamian merchants spread their commercial institutions far and wide, into Western Asia, Egypt and Europe. As a



result, words for 'head' in Hebrew (*rôš*), Aramaic (*rêš*), Arabic (*ra's[u-l-mâli]*), Greek (*kefálaion*), Egyptian (Demotic *d'd'*) and Latin (*caput*) designate 'capital'. Thus our English word 'capital' (via Latin *caput*) reflects ancient Mesopotamian usage. And indeed our financial system, that reckons with interest on principal, harks back to the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Initiating transactions by depositing security is attested in the cuneiform contracts from Ugarit of the fourteenth century B.C. French *arrhes* ('pledge' or 'security') goes back to Latin *arrabo*, which appears in Greek as *arrabôn* and still earlier in Hebrew as *êrâbôn*. The word now occurs earlier yet in the consonantal alphabet at Ugarit, as *êrbn* 'a pledge (left as security)'. The spread of the word shows that conducting business on pledges or security reached Europe from the Near East, whose traders (like the Phoenicians) carried their methods as well as their wares to Europe by ship.

It is the Egyptian solar year of 365 days that has reached us, albeit with Julian and Gregorian refinements. And with the solar year, we have inherited from Egypt the month, independent of the phases of the moon. Moreover, our division of the day into twenty-four hours, like so many elements of western civilization, came from the land of the Pharaohs.

Babylonian mathematics and astronomy have left an indelible impression on our exact sciences. We still call some of the planets by their Babylonian names in translation; for example, Venus is simply the Latin reflex of Ishtar. In more ways than one, we follow the sexagesimal system of the Sumerians (whose culture was spread by their Assyro-Babylonian successors). Thus we divide the hour into sixty minutes, and the minute into sixty seconds; and the circle into 360 degrees with each degree divisible into sixty minutes, and each minute into sixty seconds.

Our most English-sounding names, like John and Mary or David<sup>4</sup> and Susan, are from the Hebrew.

The Sabbath, perhaps the most important labour legislation next to the abolition of slavery, is a Hebrew institution.

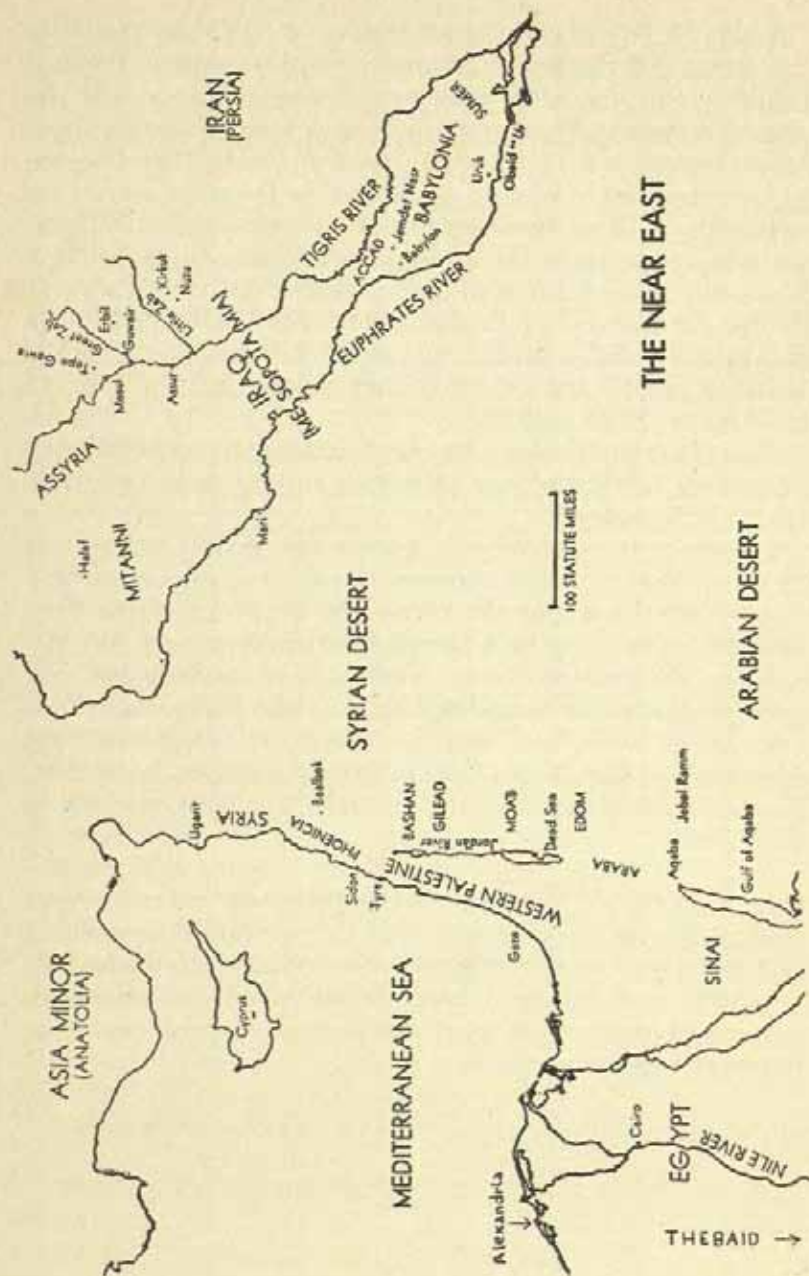
Our Near East heritage is so basic that new discoveries often throw back the origins of our culture by centuries and even millennia. To take an example that brings into play both Hebrew and non-Hebraic records: Shakespeare, in making Shy-

lock say: 'A Daniel come to judgment', refers to the Daniel of the apocryphal History of Susanna (not the canonical Book of Daniel). This Daniel is a Canaanite hero of justice, and the sources of his motif have recently been thrown back to the fourteenth century B.C. by the excavations at Ugarit (See Chapter 7) which yielded a whole epic about this Daniel of justice. In re-reading Milton, Shakespeare, or countless other authors, any scholar who keeps abreast of the rich discoveries in the Near East could make many such fresh contributions to the 'sources behind the sources' of English literature. For the Bible has always exercised a direct and potent influence on English-speaking people, and the Near East happens to be the world in which the Bible evolved.

Near East archaeology has been making far richer contributions to our knowledge of human history than any other branch of investigation.

Thanks to it, we now have a controlled history going back to about 3000 B.C. with written records in Mesopotamia and Egypt. We have also the rich archaeological remains from stratified cities going back (for example, in the case of Jericho) to about the year 6000 B.C. Near East archaeology has thus greatly widened our knowledge of men who built cities. Much more is left to be done than has been done; for every mound excavated in the Near East, a hundred remain untouched. Besides, most of the excavated mounds have been dug only in small part.

In the following pages we shall see how the explorer discovers mounds in Western Asia and how the excavator digs them; what the finds are and what they reveal. The results of such investigations are the legacy of members of the human race to which we all belong. I hope the reader will not regard the contents of this book as an escape from the present world but rather as a key to part of it.



# THE NEAR EAST



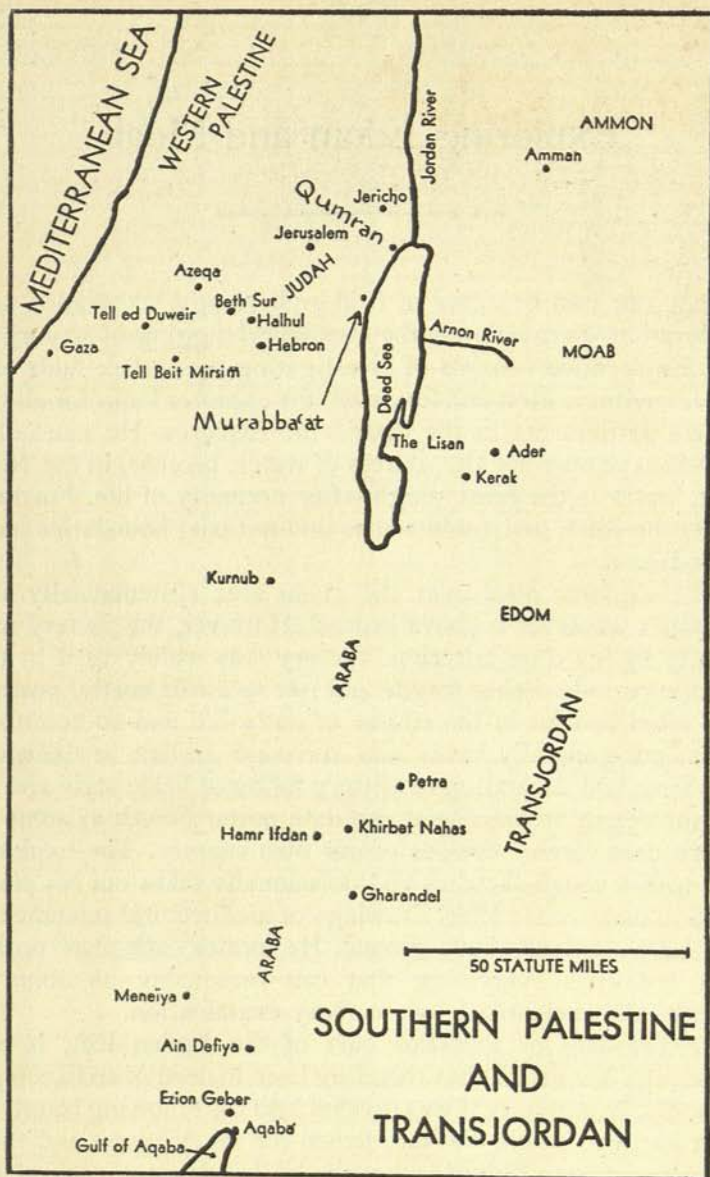
## Exploring Edom and Moab



THERE ARE TWO branches of field archaeology: excavation and exploration. Excavation is the methodical digging of an ancient site. Exploration consists of investigating the surface finds of a given territory. First and foremost, the explorer looks for all the ancient settlements in the district he explores. He must also keep his eye open for the sources of water, because, in the Near East, water is the most sought-after necessity of life. Furthermore, the roads and trade routes and national boundaries have to be traced.

The explorer goes over the given area systematically and examines whatever is above ground. However, the pottery will usually be his chief criterion. Pottery was widely used in the historic periods. Being fragile and not as a rule costly, pottery was often broken in the course of daily life and so countless fragments generally cover and surround ancient settlements. The form and decoration of pottery followed fickle style and so the competent archaeologist can date pottery much as some of us can date cars or dresses of our own century. The explorer also makes rough sketches and occasionally takes out his plane table to make more exact drawings of architectural monuments that have survived above ground. He locates each place on his map and does everything that can reasonably be done to describe the ancient site by a cursory examination.

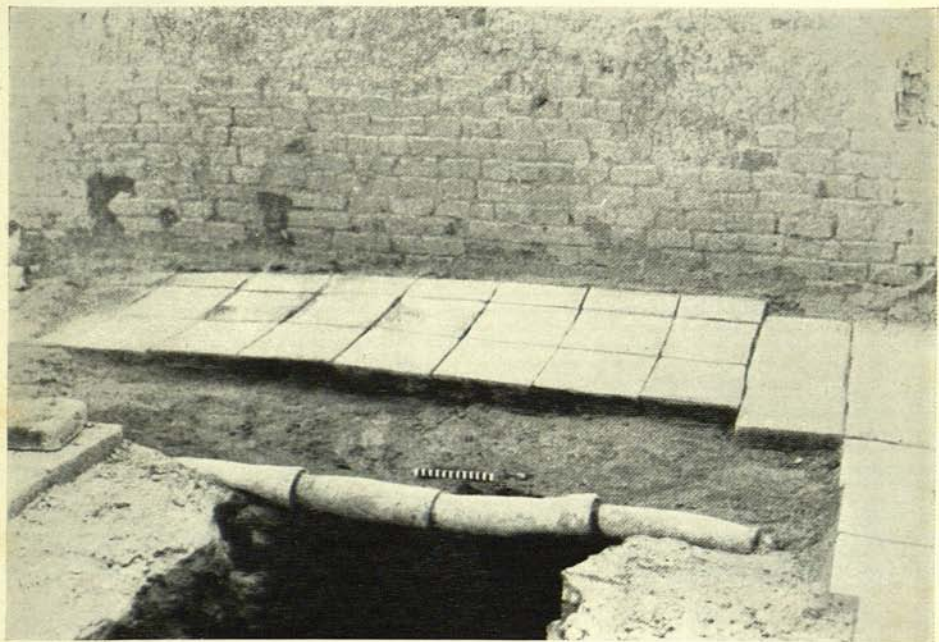
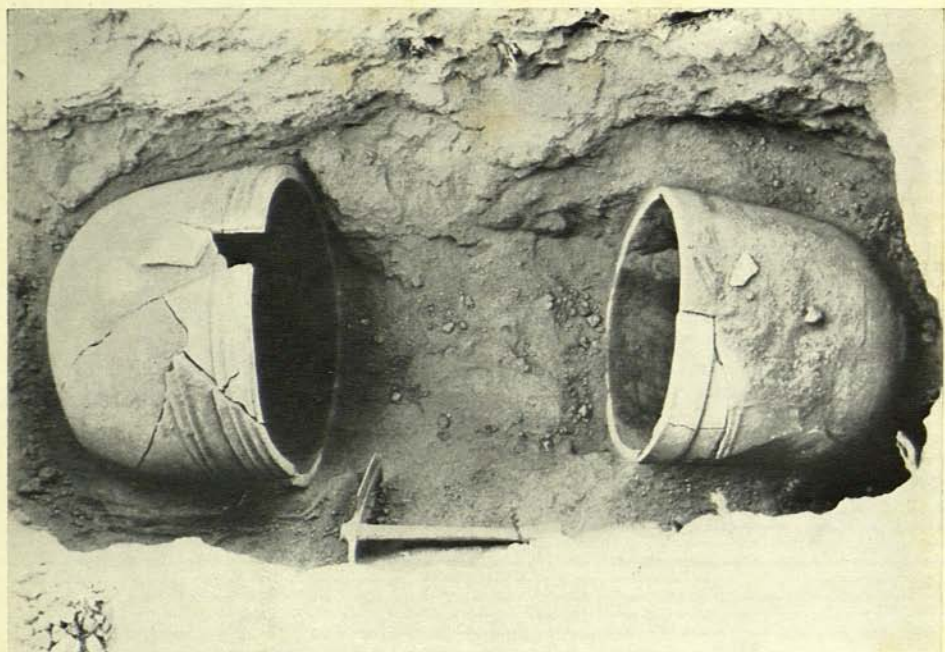
Transjordan, or Palestine east of the Jordan Rift, is not sufficiently known and has therefore been in need of archaeological study. In antiquity it was divided into the following countries from north to south: Bashan, famed for its rich men and their pampered wives; Gilead, whose balm has become proverbial; Ammon, occupying the central position; Moab, the land of Ruth; and Edom, which stretched on both sides of the Rift. All of these nations in antiquity belonged to a group of people





The Khazna, or Treasury, at Petra.





ABOVE. A Capsule Burial at Tell Billa. BELOW. A floor and drainage pipe at Tell Billa.

called the Canaanites. Culturally and linguistically they were practically identical with the Judean and Israelite 'Canaanites' west of the Rift. Indeed some of the Israelite tribes lived in Transjordan. It was Yahwism that distinguished the two Hebrew nations from the other Canaanites and it was the great Hebrew prophets who transformed their little 'Canaanite' people into one of the great factors of world history.

Transjordan is a very different land from Western Palestine. The latter, with its holy sites, has been attracting many visitors from distant lands, especially since the Crusades, and has therefore become largely occidentalized. Transjordan, however, is relatively unspoiled where occidental ways have not made serious encroachments.<sup>5</sup> Tribes wander there, subject to the law of the desert, and men armed with loaded rifles walk and ride the length and breadth of the land.

It was in the spring of 1934 that it was decided to launch our expedition from Jerusalem. We had a Chevrolet truck in which we packed our supplies. The importance of ceramics to the explorer was reflected in the numerous bags we took along so as to keep the pottery finds from being mixed up. We had to have at least one bag for every site we might possibly examine. In addition to that, we had our photographic equipment; for in archaeological work it is not too much of an exaggeration to say there is no such thing as too many pictures. We had a diary for recording a detailed account of our discoveries, and drawing equipment for making plans. Each man had a sleeping bag; for, like the Arabs, we were to be the guests of Allah, with no roof over our heads but God's heaven. The sleeping bag is large enough to hold a fairly tall man; blankets are inside, and at night you crawl in and make yourself as comfortable as you can. Mother earth does not make a comfortable couch during the first couple of nights out, but thereafter one almost forgets about beds. We brought very little foodstuff and cooking equipment because we planned to live off the land as much as we could. For each man, we took a canteen to hold the most precious of all supplies—water. Nor did we forget mosquito netting, quinine, and a first-aid kit.

The director, Dr Nelson Glueck, and I were the only ones to start from Jerusalem. We drove eastward, down and down the winding road, until an hour later we had descended from a



height of about 2,700 feet above sea level to the Dead Sea Valley, which is 1,292 feet below sea level, the lowest point on the world's surface. After crossing the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan we began to go up into the hills of Ammon, and in the City of Amman (which the Greeks called Philadelphia) we picked up the other members of our expedition, Mr R. G. Head and an Arab policeman named Ali Abu Ghosh.

Ali was assigned to us as a guard, but since there was never any guarding to do, he chose to assist us in our archaeological interests. Thus, among many other things, he learned from us the highly technical chronology of practically all of the ceramics of Palestine and Transjordan.

Another Arab, Hasan, joined our party. Though Hasan was one of the most arrant liars I have ever come across, I shall always think of him as an engaging companion. He had told us he had an intimate knowledge of the country we were going to traverse, although really he knew practically nothing about it. Fortunately, as things turned out, we did not need his advice on topographical matters. What Hasan could do to perfection was bake bread, and every day we enjoyed the unleavened native bread that he baked on a convex sheet of metal set on a tripod of stones over a blazing fire of desert thorns and twigs.

From Amman we drove on to Kerak, the Biblical city of Qir-Moab, a remarkable place on an isolated hill. The chief of police there assured us he would do everything to facilitate our expedition. We were to explore wild territory and we happily hired a sheikh called Auda, to supply us with camels and to guide us. The sheikh was called into the office of the police chief and was told that if anything should happen to any of us, he and his tribe would be held responsible. The best guarantee of safety in the desert is to be under the protection of a member of some influential tribe. Then no one in the desert will dare rob or kill the stranger because it is a part of honour for the protecting tribe to exact blood revenge.

Auda took with him four young men of his tribe to serve as camel boys. We hired five of Auda's camels at the high price of one dollar per camel per day. The camels were equipped with two goatskins used as water bags, one hanging on the left and one on the right side of each camel. Our sleeping bags were put over the rough wooden saddles, and the expedition was ready to

start. I have a great affection for both the camel and the Bedouin, who go together perfectly in the desert. They live a sort of symbiotic existence, and it is almost inconceivable to think of the Bedouin Arab and his camel living independently in the Arabian Desert. For one thing the camel can do without water for days on end, and for another, the Arabs can find water where other men would die of thirst. It may just be a trickle, but they know where it is if it exists in their territory, and their territory is wide. No fodder need be taken along, for the ordinary camel can subsist on the sparse briars and thistles of the desert. At night the Arab lets his camel graze but the camel is hobbled to keep him from straying too far.<sup>6</sup>

It has been said that the Bedouin Arab is a parasite that lives on the camel, and this to a great extent is true. It is the camel that carries him about; it is the camel's hair that supplies him with both his clothes and his tent; the camel's dung is the fuel of the desert; it is the camel's meat that supplies food for his banquets; the camel's milk is his beverage; and I could go on enumerating the basic gifts of the camel to his Arab master.

Once our caravan was organized, we rode down toward the Dead Sea, specifically toward the 'tongue' of land called the Lisan (Arabic for 'tongue') that protrudes into the southern part of the Sea. As we descended we were on the look-out for two types of ruins. The first type is known as a tell. A tell is generally a mound consisting of several towns superimposed, one on the other. Tells arise when a town wall keeps the debris from being washed out by the rains. The other type of ruin is called a khirba. The latter has no wall roundabout to retain the soil and therefore the ruins are washed clean and exposed by the rains.

The terrain we were going to explore is called the Araba: the straight valley several miles across, extending from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. We were undertaking this exploration during the finest of the seasons of the year, the spring. The rains were just ending and the desert was actually in flower. Though it may sound strange, there are about two weeks in the spring when the desert is a garden of yellows, blues, reds, and all the colours of the rainbow. The closest thing to romance that I have ever seen in the desert is a camel boy picking a beautiful bouquet of flowers and giving it



most affectionately to his camel. The Bedouins have an extensive knowledge of plants and animals; and, among other things, know the camel's favourite flowers and weeds.

A few nomads were in the Araba at this time so that their goats and camels might graze on the seasonal vegetation of the desert. The inertia of tradition throughout the world, but especially there, is almost unbelievable. That was a famine year, and once, when we were passing by a stream full of trout and other tempting fish, these people were going with long-drawn faces, nearly starving to death. I asked them why they didn't catch and eat the fish. They said they couldn't; fish simply wasn't being eaten and they would rather starve. I asked if it was forbidden by their religion, and the reply was: no, nothing of the kind, it just wasn't being done. Their ancestors had come from the desert where fish do not exist and therefore are not eaten. Far be it from the Bedouins to depart from the ways of their fathers!

Our method of work was this: We rode along the foothills on either side, occasionally crossing the Araba in order to trace whatever ruins we could find including the old police posts that guarded the caravan trails in antiquity. The landscape is quite scenic, for both Eastern and Western Palestine are mountainous with the long, straight lane of the Araba between them.

Riding on a camel was a new experience. For the first two or three days it was a bit trying until our abdominal muscles became accustomed to the motion. I cannot think of anything more peaceful than riding in the desert after the motion of the camel has become the normal state. Then the rider can attain an enviable state of mind with his thoughts either in the desert or worlds away. The camel, like the horse, can be a noble or a base creature. There are nags and racers among both species. I must confess that we were stuck with nags. When we had hired the camels we were told they were the finest racing camels in the land. It turned out that we couldn't get more than three miles an hour out of them, unless they were frightened, in which case the madness of their wild course was more striking than the speed. It seems that only the Arabs can make the proper sounds the camel understands, and vice versa. A guttural growl from the one is immediately understood by the other.

On the second night out we ill-advisedly camped near the

water supply. Of course, the mosquitoes came down on us by the thousand. Among the follies of my youth was a slight touch of hypochondria. Consequently I thought of malaria and took quinine. Two days later Dr Glueck got a slight attack of alternating fever and chills. Two days to the hour after that, he was taken with a worse attack. None of us knew much about medicine, but, since I was the son of a physician, my colleagues generally regarded me as the closest available approximation to a doctor. Anyway, I diagnosed the case as the type of malaria that occurs every two days, and by anticipating his attacks and giving him a goodly dose of quinine a little before the attack was due, he came through unscathed. After that experience we never camped near the water supply again. Instead, after filling our goatskins we would ride on for a distance before stopping for the night.

We came to a site on the east side, called Hamr Ifdan. Here we found a ruin and, examining its contour, found it to be a fortress. The pottery round about could be dated to the time of Solomon and to the period immediately following, which is known as the age of the Divided Monarchy. We wondered why a wise man like Solomon had built a large fortress in such an out-of-the-way place. Near by we noticed a spring, but even so, why come down to the most God-forsaken country of the world in order to build a fortress and guard a little bit of a spring? During the next few days we found out why King Solomon was interested in keeping this district under control and guarding all the available water supply. For, as we shall soon see, much of Solomon's famed wealth came from the desolate Araba.

As the evening drew on we sat around the fire, discussed the work of the day, and had our supper. This night we were troubled more than previous nights with the most distressing groaning of camels. We asked Sheikh Auda what all the noise meant. He told us of a quaint Arab custom: A milch camel had to be milked every night and, in order to get the camel's attention off the milking, they used to drive a wooden peg into her nose. We told Auda please to do this a little bit before bedtime thereafter so that the worst of the noise might by then be over.

That night was a bright moonlit night. I was fast asleep when, for some reason or other, I awoke and there was a tremendous arch stationed over me. It was a camel with its front legs on one



side of me and its rear legs on the other. There was nothing I could do. I could not even flee, imprisoned as I was in my sleeping bag. I just waited and when the camel decided to go to another spot for grazing, he stepped across me and left me to my dreams.

The next important site we reached is known as Khirbet Nahas, which means the 'ruin of copper'. This was different from other places we had visited. Here we found hundreds of stone furnaces and beside them, heaps of slag. Obviously metal-bearing stones had been smelted here. We looked about us and found there were copper mines all about. Of course the next thing we did was to examine the abundant pottery lying around the furnaces. The sherds could be dated to the period of Solomon and his immediate successors: the same period as the Megiddo strata of Solomonic days. These sherds were identical with the pottery found at Hamr Ifdan. Here were Solomon's mines so famed in literature; and for the first time in history mines were discovered that could definitely be attributed to Solomon on solid archaeological evidence. Perhaps it would have sounded a little more exciting had we found gold mines. However, it turns out that Solomon was a 'copper king', and all along the Araba, on both sides, we found many copper mines and smelting stations, all attributable to Solomon and his immediate successors.

As we made our way southward, we came to a little oasis called Gharandel, which stays in my mind particularly because of a few welcome palm trees there. It was used in Nabatean and Roman times as a caravanserai and police post.

Crossing to the other side of the Araba, we came to the most scenic place I have ever seen in Western Palestine. (Most of the finest Palestinian scenery, like the Arnon Gorge and Petra, happens to be on the eastern side.) Our caravan entered this mountainous place called Meneiya at sunset. The colouring was superb. Within an hour or two we had discovered seven different mining and smelting sites, all datable to Solomon and the kings who followed him.

On the next day we went in a southeast direction, heading toward Aqaba, the city on the northeast corner of the Gulf of Aqaba. On the way we came to a well, known as Ain Defiya. The water there is brackish and so can be drunk without risk. However, it is salty enough to be quite unpalatable. We made

tea out of it because we couldn't stomach it as it was. We put in lump after lump of sugar but to no avail. After drinking this unsavoury tea and eating our lunch, I remarked to Hasan, 'Tomorrow we shall be in Aqaba.' He looked at me somewhat outraged and said, 'Please don't say that. Say: Inshallah ["If Allah has willed it"], we shall reach Aqaba tomorrow.' I thereupon asked why it was necessary to be so theological about such a commonplace, to which Hasan replied: 'Who knows, perhaps Allah has foreordained that this very night we shall be murdered and in the morning found lying in pools of our own blood.' Afterwards I regularly prefaced 'Inshallah' to all statements about future events. If one must speak with certainty, it is well to do so only in the case of past events for 'the future is in the hands of Allah'. And, I might add, the only way to gain peace of mind in a country of that type is to have the purely fatalistic attitude that goes with the land. None of us, not even Ali, could have defended himself if we had been attacked during the night, for all of us were imprisoned so to speak in sleeping bags, from which we could not spring to our feet. Furthermore, we did not even ask Auda to have his lads take turns at standing guard during the night. Instead, we merely put our trust in Allah, for all men, but especially those that wander in His desert, are in His care.

At Aqaba we were received in the most hospitable manner of the Arabs. We were put up in the police station there. The prisoners, oddly enough, were walking about enjoying apparent freedom. They were used as waiters and servants instead of being shut up in cells. The police would say to them, 'Won't you please do this or that?' and I could detect no trace of bullying or even of discourtesy to the prisoners.

On the first night a great feast was prepared for us. An Arab feast is something to remember. The guests sit in a circle and the food is brought in, in a large basin. The classical dish is a bed of rice with milk sauce, with either a roasted lamb or kid served on top of the rice. Your host stands over you and occasionally picks the choice bits, like the liver, which he breaks into pieces and tosses graciously before you; you in turn nod to him, pick them up, and eat them. There are no spoons or forks or knives; no chairs or tables. The technique is quite simple but requires a good bit of delicacy. You take a fistful of the rice and squeeze it



gently until the extra sauce drips out; then you open your mouth wide and toss the 'bullet' of rice in, without getting any on your face. If you can do that, you have one of the essentials of 'good table manners'. There is no table talk. You are supposed to eat as quickly as you can and get full as soon as possible, because if you talk you are keeping others waiting. Then, to show you have had enough, you indulge in a lusty belch and rise to your feet. Servants then come with water, soap, and towel. You rinse your mouth, wash your face and hands, and sit on the side upon a comfortable divan and smoke a water pipe. Then the conversation begins. As you chat, your host will sprinkle rose water on you and sometimes ask you to hold out your hands so that he may pour some on them. The men of the place then sit about the same basin of food and have their fill. What they leave is taken out to the womenfolk and children. The status of woman is not high in old fashioned Islam. In Chapter 8 we shall show that she was better off in certain bygone ages.

The next day we wanted to freshen up a bit and so made for the Gulf shore. Except for the jellyfish which had been washed up, the swimming was perfect.

We noticed not far north of the shore a mound in the middle of the Araba which rather surprised us, because the winds coming down from the north are generally strong and it would have been much more reasonable to build a city on either side of the Araba. This mound is called Tell Kheleifa, later identified as Ezion Geber, the seaport of Solomon on the Red Sea, and excavation subsequently showed that it had been built by Solomon and that the chief industry was smelting. The smelting furnaces were actually situated with their backs toward the north, whence the winds come. There are holes in the north walls to serve as flues so that the wind would come in directly. In other words, the fanning of the fire was automatically taken care of by the steady winds that sweep down the Araba. The riddle of the location was thus surprisingly but plausibly solved.

It is interesting to note that from a somewhat later period, in the third city (not the first built by Solomon), was found a jar with South Arabian letters incised. This is evidence of trade with the land of the Queen of Sheba, who according to the Bible narrative had visited King Solomon. Her long trip to Jerusalem would doubtless have had business as well as personal motives.

After resting up a few days in Aqaba, we decided to go to Jebel Ramm. We were to motor this time. Our truck had come through by road over the mountains of Moab and Edom to meet us. We motored up through Wady Yitm to the plateau of the Arabian Desert. There nothing relieves the bleak waste-land except mirage. Usually the mirage lakes disappear when one approaches where they seem to be. Some in this district, however, seemed just as real as any lake even at very close range. It was like riding through a sea without splashing. Real objects like rocks and hills are reflected in mirage just as in genuine water. After riding through miles and miles of desert, we rubbed our eyes as if we had reached a fairyland, for ahead of us were bright purple mountains with cream-coloured tops dazzling in the sun, all rising sheer out of a smooth plain. This time it was no optical illusion; we were in Jebel Ramm, the most fantastic landscape I have ever seen. There we found some of the Dominican Fathers excavating a Nabatean temple with beautiful painted columns. It was very pleasant to see the distinguished French Fathers from Jerusalem uncovering the handsome Nabatean shrine.

After that we rode across the hilly, rocky fields of Edom and Moab, scanning the landscape for every ancient settlement. An examination of hundreds of sites showed that the countries were heavily occupied from the twenty-first to the seventeenth century B.C. Then there was a virtual blank with no occupied cities until the thirteenth century B.C. Now the historic importance of that is obvious to any Bible student because it is stated that the children of Israel wandered through that territory only to meet with opposition on the way to the Promised Land. Until the thirteenth century there could have been no such opposition because the land was devoid of a settled population. Therefore, the fifteenth century date of the Exodus that most scholars had been adhering to is quite out of the question, and we are obliged to return to the traditional date of the Exodus and Conquest in the thirteenth century.<sup>6a</sup>

From the thirteenth to the eighth century B.C. we found relics of a heavy period of occupation that terminated to a great extent early in the sixth century B.C. However, the richest period of all was the Nabatean age. The Nabateans developed their remarkable civilization especially during the first two cen-



turies before and after Christ and continued well into Roman times.

Interesting, too, is the fact that from 1200 A.D. to 1900 A.D. the country was virtually unoccupied: a gap of seven hundred years. Just in our own twentieth century are people resettling the land in more than negligible numbers. For the older periods, from the twenty-first to the seventeenth and from the thirteenth to the sixth centuries B.C., we were able to trace the fortresses that guarded the boundaries on the north and south that separated the ancient kingdoms from each other and also the fortresses for keeping the desert nomads from raiding the settled nations of Transjordan. By charting the cities, we were able to make a series of historic maps showing the places of settlement in each period. For by examining the pottery on any given site you can tell during which periods it has been occupied. As a rule, if no remains from a given period are found, the place was not occupied then. Not less than five hundred sites were occupied during the Nabatean period. Nabatean pottery is one of the finest groups I have ever handled in the Near East. It is fine of texture and often painted and sometimes incised, with a great variety of designs.

The most famous and the most beautiful of the Nabatean sites is Petra, which a modern poet has described as 'the rose-red city, half as old as time'. You come into it through a narrow gorge at the end of which you behold the most exquisite of a great series of buildings carved out of purple mountain sides with façades in handsome Hellenistic style. Inside, the rooms are carved out of the solid mountain walls. On both sides of the valley stand the magnificent buildings facing one another. It defies description. It is the sort of thing you have to visit to appreciate in all its majesty. If Jebel Ramm is the most beautiful landscape I have ever witnessed, Petra is the loveliest combination of art and nature.

I engaged a guide in Petra not so much for the misinformation that most guides are able to supply, but because he was an amusing fellow and because you can pick up quite a bit about the country and dialect from such guides. We came to a columbarium containing pigeon holes where the sacred doves used to roost. I asked him what it was and he replied it was an ancient post office, each hole being a 'P.O.B.' 'That is very



interesting', I said, 'but how could anyone possibly get to those topmost boxes, which are several times higher than any man can reach?' Without hesitation he exclaimed, 'Don't you know that in antiquity giants were in the land; each one forty cubits high?'

In addition to covering the Transjordanian or eastern part of the territory south of the Dead Sea we wanted to survey also the western, and, for that reason, we took another short expedition from Jerusalem, later in the summer. We went down to Beer Sheba, and down to the Araba via Kurnub. The temperature was about 130 degrees in the shade with no shade to be had, and yet it was not very uncomfortable because there was practically no humidity.

We had maps with us made by the British about the time of the first world war. These maps naturally had the wells and springs charted. We were depending on finding a certain well, only to discover that it had dried up since the map had been made. Two others that we were looking for had also dried up in the meanwhile. By that time we were in desperate need of water, for we had but little water left in our canteens. We had told our Greek truck driver to wait for us farther south, high up on the mountains and not to try to meet us in the impassable Araba. We held a 'council of war' and wondered whether our water would enable us to meet the driver at the top of the mountains. We decided that if Allah was very, very kind to us, it might possibly be done but things looked bad indeed. As we walked grimly on our way through the desert one of our Arab camel boys heard something. He leaped up on top of our baggage camel (our only camel on this trip) and saw a most welcome sight about a quarter of a mile away.

Our truck driver had disobeyed his orders, but had used his intelligence, and blazed a trail which had never been attempted by motor before. He had come down with a truck full of supplies including plenty of water. The day was saved. We shouted for joy, emptied our canteens down our parched throats, and ran to the truck to bless the disobedient driver and to drink our fill of water.

On our way back we went through the deserted regions of Sinai and southern Palestine. That entire country was desolate except for a few nomads with their tents and flocks.<sup>7</sup> Yet in the Byzantine period, part of it was full of men; men sought out that

sequestered land as a retreat in which they might escape the evils of this world. Renouncing civilization, these men formed extensive monastic communities in the remote tracts of southern Palestine. Perhaps the most impressive of these settlements is Sbeita, excavated by the Colt Expedition. The excavators cleared out one of the ancient cisterns, and a few of the winter rains sufficed to fill the cistern with enough water to supply the expedition with water for the whole season. This illustrates the possibilities of almost any country, provided the right kind of people are there. With energetic people, the few, but heavy, winter rains can be stretched a long, long way.

Unfortunately the prosperity established by the Byzantines was effectively terminated by the Arab conquest. The Bedouin Arab is at home in the desert and can subsist and live his noble life of freedom in places where the Byzantine monk would have perished of thirst. But, on the other hand, the Bedouin is neither a builder nor cultivator. Under him, cisterns fill up and fertile terraced fields fall into ruin and become as the wilderness from which he emerged and in which he finds himself at home. And so the southern wastelands of Palestine and Sinai became once more part of the far-flung terrain of the nomadic Semite, who roves as a herdsman, partaking of Allah's hospitality.



## A Minor Expedition among the 'Lions' of Ader



AN ANCIENT SITE discovered in the course of exploration may be of sufficient interest to occasion trial soundings before a major expedition is decided on. Also, some ruins are of such limited size that a minor expedition of a few weeks, or even days, is enough to realize the objective.

In 1924, a group of American scholars, including Professor William F. Albright, visited in the course of their expedition the site of Ader in Transjordan. What particularly attracted their attention was a temple which had been built on the bedrock of a hilltop. The temple dated from about 1800 B.C. and deserved excavation at the earliest possible opportunity. Those scholars who first visited the site also noted traces of the Early and Middle Bronze Age, showing that it had been settled before and after 1800 B.C., as well as traces of the Iron Age of about 1000 B.C., and of Nabatean-to-Early Arabic occupations.

In November, 1933, Dr Albright organized a small expedition to Ader. We left Jerusalem, went down across the Jordan and up into the hills of Ammon and then into the land of Moab, where Ader is situated. It was found that great changes had taken place since 1924. For one thing, the population of the town had quadrupled. Over the later ruins, a large Christian colony had settled and built, in addition to many private dwellings, a large church. It was an especially great disappointment to us to find that a group of nomads had settled on and around the top of the temple and had destroyed much of the ancient structure by using it as a quarry for getting stone to build their present houses. The home of the sheikh, for instance, was located squarely upon the temple. The sheikh was kind enough to let us dig through his courtyard to facilitate our study of what was left of the temple.



Our expedition was to last only about two weeks and we were operating on rather slender funds. We managed to rent a two-room wing of the church as quarters for the expedition. We used the smaller room for spreading out our sleeping bags at night, while the larger room served as our museum, workroom, store-room, dining hall, and living room. We brought with us all the tools necessary for the digging and recording. The members of the expedition were few but willing; and I may say that the smaller the staff of an expedition the more important it is to have people who are good sports and who will not object to tasks they had not bargained for. Everyone must help in any way he can. For instance, I was one of the two cooks for the expedition, and that was a chore that I have never had to do either before or since. Two of the younger members of the staff shared the photographic work. All of us took part in the actual supervising of the labourers.

The Nabatean-to-Early Arabic ruins are situated not far from the large church in the part of the town now inhabited by the Christians. I was assigned to the work on the older period, across the wady. This area is now inhabited by Moslems of Bedouin stock, from whom we mustered about fifty sturdy men for excavating a couple of limited tracts.

Trial trenches are unfortunately a necessary aspect of 'trial digs'. As we shall see, in a major expedition the excavator may proceed level by level without pits. Pits and trenches often play havoc with a site and make it difficult to determine precisely the level of objects found in pits or trenches. Some excavators still try to justify pit sinking in principle. However, most archaeologists resort to clearing stratum after stratum if not over a whole site, then at least in a good-sized area. At Ader, where we had little time and money at our disposal, we were obliged to limit ourselves to small excavation areas which were methodically cleared down to bedrock.

I thus supervised the digging of a 'sample area' measuring ten by four metres, and it proved to contain the remains of three different periods. The latest was from about 1800 B.C., that is, in the transition from Early Bronze to Middle Bronze. Beneath, the preceding stratum had been destroyed by fire, for it was found covered with ashes. Below that, and on bedrock, was the earliest level of about 2100-1900 B.C. The evidence for dating

the levels was almost entirely ceramic; numerous potsherds of well-known types settled the approximate chronology beyond cavil.

Thus while I supervised the Bronze Age area, others were clearing a portion of the Nabatean-to-Early Arabic town across the wady and also making as exact plans as possible of the ill-fated temple.

Ader is a town completely unknown in the literature that has come down to us, so that whatever we found was in the nature of an addition to historical knowledge, and not merely a confirmation of it.

An unusual situation developed while I was completing my job of excavating the trial area. Our Sheikh Mohammed, a very valuable man who acted as my assistant foreman, asked me one day what we were trying to accomplish by digging; why were we spending good money to find old potsherds and bricks and fragmentary walls. I called him aside and said, 'Sheikh Mohammed, you are an intelligent man and I speak to you as such. We are looking for traces of early civilizations—for things belonging to ancient men whom Allah has destroyed.' 'Ah!' said he surprised, 'Ah! But why did you not tell me it was *that* you wanted? Had you told me, I could have showed you where the tombs of the Kings of Moab are.' On hearing this, I was frankly startled, for we were in the heart of the land of Moab. Of course my better judgment dictated scepticism, but yet there is always the one chance in a million that oral tradition may reflect fact and may bring it to light by the oddest accident. I asked Mohammed what evidence he had for his assertion, and he said, 'Do you see the mouth of that cave over there? Well, often have I seen fire like a streak of lightning issuing from that cave. That can mean nothing but that the kings of Moab lie buried there.' (That, by the way, is a perfect example of a syllogism in the hinterland of the Near East.) I asked him if others had seen the same fire, and he said, 'Yes, you may ask any of my brethren here. They will tell you, for they have seen the same thing.' I called over a few of them—I do not think they had previously discussed this as a possibility for further digging—and they told me they had often seen the same fire. After lunch I told Dr Albright about the amazing report, whereupon he walked across the wady with me to question the Arabs and





ABOVE. A dish with animals in relief, *in situ*, Tepe Gawra. BELOW. A two-lipped jar used for distilling, according to Dr Martin Levey, who supposes that a convex lid caught steam from fluid boiling in the jar and drained it between the lips.



ways that seem strange to us.) Then I went on with a glowing description of what the lion is like: how this courageous beast sallies from his den; how all the earth trembles at the sound of his voice; how he is respected above all the beasts of Allah's creation, whereas the weak mouse must flee at the sight of even a cat, and lives his wretched life in constant fear. I concluded: 'And now, decide whether you are like unto the lion or like unto the mouse!' A few cried out, 'We are like the lion, O Khawaja, we are like the lion!'; but most still maintained a silence dictated more by confusion than discretion. Then I went on with another glamorous account of the exploits of the lion, and told them that the time had come to make up their minds. By this time they had been fanned into a state more akin to frenzy than mere enthusiasm, and they shrieked out their decision to be like lions. Quickly seizing the opportunity, I said: 'All right, you have made up your minds, you are lions. And do you not know where the lion has his home? Is it not *in the cave*?' To my relief and joy many men got up at once and took up their picks. 'My lions, dig!' I shouted, and the work went on. There were still about ten 'mousy' men on the sidelines, but, fortunately, within a few minutes five or six of them came up to me and said they had reconsidered matters and would rather be lions than mice, so I reinstated them. Gradually, all but one had joined the lions, and I am sorry to say that I gave the lone mouse an unkind look and taunted him by saying, 'So you are the mouse; run away then, before my lions devour you!' Whereupon the other men growled and jumped at him. At last, with tears in his eyes, he said that he too would try to be a lion if he were only given another chance. Magnanimously I elevated him from mousedom to lionhood, and thus all of my strikers were won back to their jobs—with no increase in pay nor decrease in hours. All they had needed was the heart of a lion. They worked as I have never seen men work before or since. As they dug away, Mohammed and I kept encouraging them with cries of, 'Who are you?' to which they would call back, 'We are your lions!' We found, as we had foreseen, remains of occupation from the twenty-first to the nineteenth centuries B.C.; and while what we unearthed was unspectacular, with no vestige of the tombs of the kings of Moab, it represented a very gratifying return for the few days we put in.

On next to the last day, when the men were sealing the entrance to the cave with rocks so that illicit diggers could have no easy access to it in our absence, Sheikh Yusuf, the sheikh of sheikhs in that district, passed by on his journey through his territory, and as he drew near on his white mare, he heard the men cry 'We are your lions!' He accordingly asked Mohammed, 'What mean these words I hear?' Mohammed proudly replied, 'Have you not heard? The Khawaja has come across the seven seas to pick my tribe out of all the tribes of Islam to be the Tribe of the Lions.' I did not want to miss any of this conversation, so I blew my whistle for time out, and joined Mohammed and Yusuf. I put in a good word for Mohammed to his superior, informing Sheikh Yusuf that I had been entertained by sheikhs and emirs from Cairo to Baghdad and from Istanbul to Arabia, and never had I met a man as worthy as Sheikh Mohammed to be called the Sheikh of the Lions. Mohammed beamed and bowed in gratitude. A large crowd had gathered to see our distinguished visitor. As I was about to blow my whistle to resume work, Mohammed asked for one more minute, and waving his hands dramatically, cried, 'Hear, you rabble! From this time on, you shall call my tribe, not the Tribe of Such-and-Such but the Tribe of the Lions; nor let any of you address me as Sheikh Mohammed, but from now on as Mohammed, the Sheikh of the Lions. Now, get away!' Thus had I innocently changed the name of a tribe in Moab and thus had I conferred a new title on a tribal chieftain.



## Sites of Simple Stratification



FEW MOUNDS CONSIST of only one level, and even fewer consist of one level without sub-phases. One of the best examples of a simple site is Khorsabad, built by Sargon of Assyria and completely abandoned at the end of his reign. It is a beautiful capital, with a city wall, temples, a palace filled with sculptures of winged bulls and other colossi; and painted tile murals. It includes a ziggurat, or stage tower, that formed part of the buildings of the religious complex; and perhaps most significant from it there came to light a tablet bearing a list of the kings of Assyria from the third millennium B.C., down to the Sargon who built Khorsabad.<sup>8</sup>

Another famous capital occupied for only one generation is Tell el Amarna, built by the Pharaoh Ikhnaton and completely abandoned soon after his death. We shall hear more of Tell el Amarna in another connection.

It is interesting that in Egypt the situation is in general quite different from that in Western Asia. The settlements were in the Nile Valley, but the Nile bed is constantly rising, and therefore there has been a continual abandonment of sites which ultimately come to lie under the water level, while the new villages spring up at a safer distance from the advancing shore. Perhaps some day the Nile at certain points may be deflected from its present course, and epoch-making excavations will be undertaken. But things being what they are, there are practically no known mound sites or stratified cities available for excavation in Egypt.

The most simply stratified site (at least architecturally) that I have ever helped excavate is the Judean fortress, Beth Sur.

The history of this Judean fortress is known from literary sources. In Joshua we read that the district including Beth Sur was overrun by the tribe of Judah, at approximately 1200 B.C. From Chronicles, we learn that Rehoboam refortified the city.



In the second century B.C., known as the Maccabean period of Jewish history, we know both from First Maccabees and from Josephus that Beth Sur was a great garrison town, second in importance only to Jerusalem. In the Maccabean period we find the following scheme of events: About 165 B.C. Judas Maccabeus with 10,000 followers routed 65,000 of the Greco-Syrian troops of Lysias. Judas Maccabeus and his brothers were thus enabled to restore and rededicate the Temple—an event still celebrated each December by the Jewish people as the Feast of Lights. Also, almost immediately thereafter, Beth Sur was refortified by Judas. The Asiatic wing of Alexander's empire had been left to the house of Seleucus. The Seleucids persecuted the Jewish nation, which still retained its old fighting spirit. The Jews were a little people but, prompted by the noble instinct to be free, preferred death to submission.<sup>9</sup>

Lysias later came back to Beth Sur with the boy king Antiochus V, but the people sallied forth and burned his engines of war. Lysias and Antiochus were forced to leave the town because Judas Maccabeus was carrying on the war in another part of the country. But the Judeans later lost the fortress to Antiochus V because the Greco-Syrians resorted to the following strategy: It was a Sabbatical (or seventh) Year, during which debts must be remitted, Hebrew slaves set free, and the land allowed to lie fallow. For the last reason, the food supplies were low,<sup>10</sup> but rather than disobey the laws of their fathers, the Jews chose to face the consequences of the serious food shortage which finally obliged them to surrender the town, from which they were then sent forth naked. The general Bacchides was left in charge of the garrison. Not long afterwards, however, Judas' brother Simon recaptured the city and converted it into a Judean town again. Such, in outline, is the history of Beth Sur as far as it was known from written records.

The first problem of the archaeologist was to identify that city with the proper modern site. From the Bible we know that Beth Sur is in the Hebron district near the settlement of Halhul. The latter place is known and the modern village there still bears the same name.

In the Halhul district there is the mound of a large walled town; the Arabs call it Khirbet et Tubeiqa. (It has been called a khirba rather than a tell because part of the ruins remained

exposed throughout the centuries.) An examination of the surface sherds showed at once that the place had been heavily occupied in the Hellenistic Age including the Maccabean period. There were also traces of the earlier settlements that are indicated for Beth Sur in the historical records. Thus Khirbet et Tubeiqa fulfilled the indispensable requirements of an identification: to wit, the (1) locational (near Halhul), (2) descriptive (a large walled town) and (3) archaeological (traces of the right periods of occupation). On the other hand, (4) traditional evidence was lacking: i.e., the present inhabitants did not know that Khirbet et Tubeiqa marks the site of Beth Sur, as they happen, for instance, to know that modern Khalil marks the site of ancient Hebron. Nor was there (5) direct toponymic evidence; for the modern name (Khirbet et Tubeiqa), is not the same as Beth Sur (contrast 'Halhul', where the old name has survived unchanged). The absence of traditional and toponymic evidence does not necessarily invalidate an identification. It is interesting to note that in this case there is some significant, though *indirect*, toponymic evidence. A Byzantine fortress situated quite close to Khirbet et Tubeiqa bears the name of Burj es Sur—meaning 'The Tower of Sur'. Thus the name of the old city has been partly preserved in that of the Byzantine tower. Accordingly, there is striking, though indirect, toponymic evidence for the identification of Khirbet et Tubeiqa with Beth Sur. It will be seen that the excavation of the site in 1931 confirmed the identification.

We undertook the excavation during the summer months when there is no rainfall. Accordingly we were able to live in tents. We engaged about 150 labourers. While their salaries were not high, as a rule we used to give them generous *baksbeesh* for any antiquities that they would find and report immediately and remove without damage. This was an incentive for them to keep their eyes wide open, to work carefully, and to turn in everything they found.

The method of digging (of which we shall have more to say) was, in brief, the clearing of the debris down to the floor level, making accurate notations as to the provenance of every article found, then labelling it adequately; entering these records in the books, and making sure that all the objects and buildings discovered were photographed and drawn; in other words, taking



precautions to keep definite and detailed records of what we found so that a scientific account might be published for the entire scholarly world. Actually the preliminary report by Professor Ovid Sellers, who directed the expedition, is a model publication.

Excavation showed that the people who built the fortress in the Hellenistic period went down to bedrock, destroying most of the remains of the older periods; therefore, we found virtually no architecture other than the well-preserved Hellenistic level of the second century B.C. This appeared to be divided into three building phases, which are perhaps to be correlated with the known building operations of Judas, Bacchides, and Simon. The debris of the earlier periods had been used for filling in at various places so that the traces of many different ages were mixed. We found some sherds from the Early Bronze Age; more from about 1600 to 1500 B.C.; and a large number of Israelite sherds reflecting the occupations down to the time of Nebuchadnezzar. These mixed finds show what stress must be laid on ceramics, for if we had not known Palestinian pottery, we should have thought that many relics of remote antiquity were Hellenistic because they happened to be found with Hellenistic remains. The confusion had resulted simply because the Hellenistic builders were too thorough (from the archaeologist's viewpoint) and went down to bedrock for laying the foundations of their fortress. The true identification of all these mixed potsherds and other relics had to be based on a knowledge of the previous discoveries at well-stratified Palestinian sites.

Practically all the walls were made of stone, so that the ground plans were easy to trace. If wall stones are in place, it is comparatively easy to remove the dirt and fallen stones from around them, and so the wall emerges. To be exact, only the lower parts and the foundations emerge, for usually the roof and upper parts have long since collapsed. We found that the city included fortifications, city gates, market places, shops, and private dwellings. One house contained tubs, but we were not sure whether they were for bathing or dyeing. There was no trace of colour left in the tubs, but dyes might fade in the course of the two millennia that separate us from the Maccabeans.<sup>11</sup>

Several of the shops were obviously wine shops. The Greco-Syrian soldiers (rather than the Judeans) may have imported



wine from the Island of Rhodes; for there were a great number of stamped wine-jar handles showing that the jars came from Rhodes. The stamps sometimes bear the names of the potters; the names of the Rhodian officials known as Eponyms, after whom the years were named; and sometimes the Rhodian month is written as well.

Among the miscellaneous discoveries was the grave of a man, presumably a soldier, whose spine had been violently broken just above the pelvis; so violently in fact that it is conceivable (though not demonstrable) he had been stepped on by one of the elephants used by the Seleucids in battle. One of the heroic Maccabean brothers was killed by an elephant on the battlefield according to First Maccabees, and other soldiers doubtless met their death that way.

The site was well equipped with cisterns for holding water, which was important particularly during sieges. We found one great reservoir with two entrances, of which the smaller was outside the city wall. It had probably been at first a natural pocket in the rock and was then improved by hewing. The Judeans may have made their sortie against the soldiers of Lysias by getting out of the smaller entrance. In this large reservoir we found many kinds of bones, mostly of animals but some of men; the latter would seem to be evidence of foul play. We also found the jaw of an *asinus onager*, a wild ass that has since become extinct in Palestine. Thus archaeological research may prove of interest for many fields of investigation, even to the zoologist and the palaeontologist.

The danger of being a mere armchair archaeologist was illustrated by an incident at Beth Sur. A distinguished library archaeologist who had never been a member of an expedition visited our excavations. We were showing him the reservoir, into which the yearly winter rains keep seeping, so that the debris is kept wet from year to year. He looked at the wet floor of the reservoir and asked of what period the reservoir was. We replied it was of the Maccabean period. 'The Maccabean period—wonderful!' he exclaimed. 'And the water is still here!'

Another amusing incident in that campaign bears repetition: After working hours I used to wrestle on an extra tent flap with our sturdy photographer. The venerable mukhtar (or mayor) used to watch us intently evening after evening. One day

Professor Albright said to him, 'O Mukhtar Yusuf, what do you think of the American sport of wrestling?' Yusuf shook his head and said, 'The art of wrestling doubtless comes from Allah and all of Allah's works are good; but, Khawaja Albright, would it not be more effective if they used daggers?'

From the period called Early Iron II (that is, from about 900 to 600 B.C.) we found several jars with stamps that showed they had been used to contain taxes paid to the king. They read: 'To the King: Hebron' (that is, from Hebron); 'To the King: Ziph'; 'To the King: Mamshat.'

We found many Egyptian scarabs, of types which could be correlated with the well-known dynasties of Egypt. We found also various stone weights with their Hebrew names inscribed on them; e.g. the 'nesef', the 'pym', the 'beqa'. Since these stones have not changed in weight we know to what weight the Hebrew words refer. These terms in Scripture are, so to speak, words rather than definite weights until you find the actual inscribed stones that tell what the word signifies in terms of weight. Archaeology provides, as it were, the illustrations for the modern edition of the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and other classics. Beth Sur also yielded numerous coins, mostly from the Seleucids, who were Alexander's successors in Asia; many from the Ptolemies, Alexander's successors in Egypt; and quite a few from the valiant Maccabeans who shook off the yoke of the Greco-Syrian tyrants.

After these discoveries, there was no doubt as to the identification of Beth Sur: it had been confirmed up to the hilt.



## Mounds of Many Cities



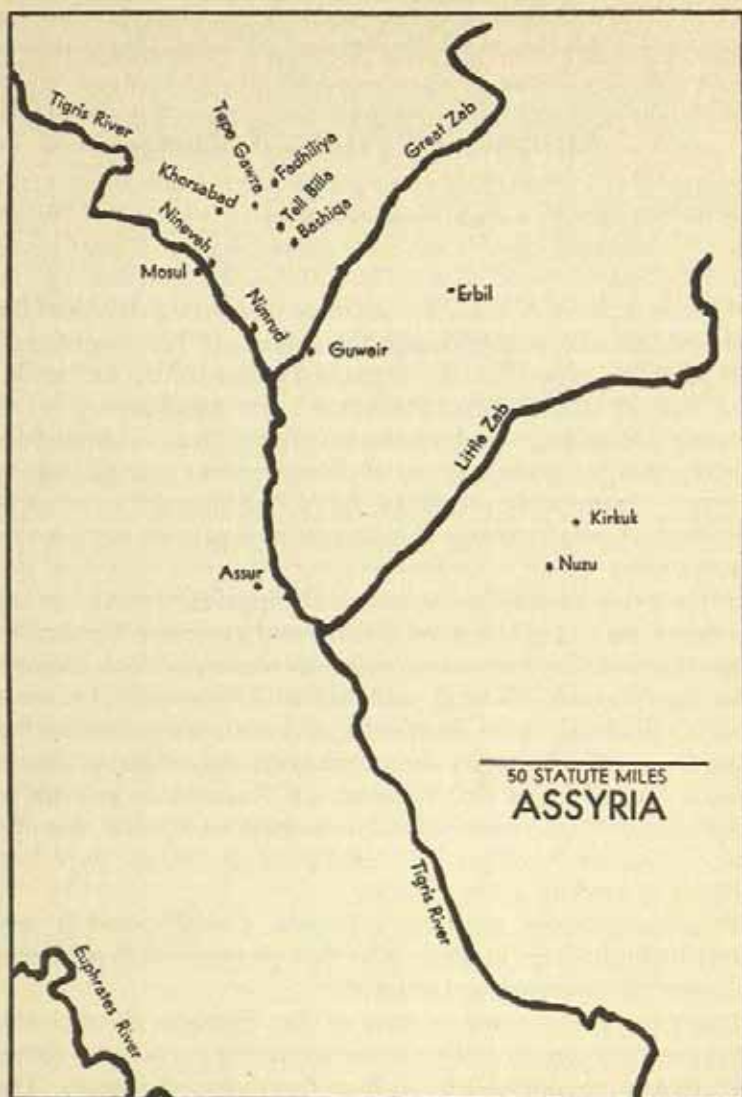
THE DEVELOPMENT of a science can often be traced in terms of the contributions of the pioneers who created it. We might well start with the name of P. E. Botta, a Franco-Italian archaeologist, who in 1848 began to excavate the Assyrian capital of Khorsabad. Nothing was then known of stratification: the whole idea of cities piled one on top of another was quite foreign to everyone. Fortunately for Botta, he picked one of the few sites in the Near East that are in the form of mounds and yet have no stratification.

In the years that followed, many distinguished men, among whom we may single out the British archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard, entered on expeditions in several rich mounds including Nineveh, Nimrud, and Assur, the capitals of ancient Assyria. While pioneers such as Layard made many spectacular discoveries, they damaged and destroyed much of the evidence. Nor did Layard know that Nineveh and Assur were mounds of many cities. But Layard will be remembered for his splendid contributions and not for such shortcomings as are bound to accompany work in a new field.<sup>12</sup>

Treasure hunting went on for quite a while, and it was Heinrich Schliemann at Troy who first recognized that he was dealing with superimposed cities.<sup>13</sup>

The next great name is that of Sir Flinders Petrie, who recognized the potential importance for dating purposes of small, insignificant-looking objects such as fragments of pottery. The attention he paid to details overlooked by other excavators enabled archaeology to make its greatest strides since Schliemann's discovery of stratification. But archaeology required rigid standards of exactitude before it could become the science it is today. Field technique reached a high standard under Professor George A. Reisner of Harvard University. Reisner's





excavations were models of painstaking carefulness, and his records are characterized by a fullness that aims at perfection. No amount of description was too much for him; no number of photographs too great; no detail too minute to be recorded. His thoroughness set a model that we all might well emulate.

The men we have singled out are actually but a few of the many great names in the annals of the development of archaeology. However, they suffice for sketching the evolution of the subject. The age of treasure hunting is over, for it is no longer a legitimate form of archaeology. Instead of that, the discipline of the archaeologist now requires well-recorded, stratigraphic excavation. A site is excavated layer by layer, and what is found in each layer is recorded, photographed, planned and described. The value of stratigraphic excavation is best brought out by the fact that it has vastly widened the horizon that we had of human history a hundred years ago. We can now go back to perhaps about the year 6000 B.C., so that our knowledge of architecture, of art, of countless aspects of life, is now vastly enlarged—thanks to stratigraphic excavation. When I say '*perhaps* about the year 6000', I am making a necessary reservation, because the Carbon-14 Test, that yielded the date '6000 B.C.' for the earliest stratified remains at Jericho, has a margin of error.\* But this margin of error may eventually be reduced to insignificance through improved laboratory technique. Meanwhile we rely on our relative chronology for the earlier periods: what lies underneath must be earlier than the layer above, but to date objects to an exact year is out of the question at present. In some cases it is possible to establish exact chronology for prehistoric periods. Thus by counting the annual rings of the yellow pine logs used in the Pueblos, one can establish an accurate chronology for periods unattested in written records. Or, again, one may base precise chronological schemes on layers of the Dead Sea basin, where each successive year has left its lamination. However, we have not discovered any such device for an absolute chronology of the prehistoric settlements buried in the mounds of the Near East.<sup>14</sup>

Before continuing our account, we might well ask ourselves why settlers chose a given place for building a city. In the Near East, as we have already observed, the chief necessity of life is

\* See note on page 184.



water. Therefore, closeness to a good water supply would be an important criterion in selecting a site. Another consideration would be protection against attack and against the unkindnesses of nature (e.g., against wind and storms). Once such a spot was found, a city would be built by settlers in quest of a place to live.

Archaeologists, contrary to popular belief, do not dig down into the earth below the surface of the plain; cities are not found under the level of the plain. Ancient cities are built on the plain or even on an eminence. Under exceptional circumstances, the archaeologist might conceivably dig down into the soil below the level of the plain to unearth tombs or cisterns. But in four years of field work, I never came across such a procedure.

The next question is: How did cities come to be piled on top of one another? Ancient cities sometimes came to an end by violent means; for example, destruction at the hands of an enemy. The bloodthirsty kings of Assyria record time after time that they came to such-and-such a city, captured it, burned it with fire and made of it a *tell*. These kings actually went about the destruction of cities knowing they would convert them into 'mounds' and they use the same word that the Arabs still use to designate a 'mound'.

Towns may be demolished by the violence of nature as well as of men. Thus the walls of Jericho may have fallen because of one of the many earthquakes of the Jordan Rift. Fire may destroy a town so quickly that the inhabitants have to flee leaving everything behind them. One of the most interesting discoveries I have ever witnessed in excavating a mound was a kitchen in an ancient house at Tepe Gawra, with the supper still on the fire—the lid still on the pot and the food still inside; the meat, of course, had disappeared during the centuries but the bones were there undisturbed. The house had burned down so quickly that the household had to abandon everything including the cooking dinner.

Sudden destruction by fire preserved Level VIII of Tepe Gawra in some places to a height of four metres. The conflagration burned the mud-brick walls into hard baked bricks, thus preserving them for the modern excavator. The misfortune of ancient man is often the good fortune of the archaeologist.

When a town was destroyed by fire, the inhabitants had to leave everything behind them so that all the non-inflammable objects are preserved in ashes for the lucky excavator. However, wherever the inhabitants had time to vacate without hurrying they would naturally take most of their possessions with them so that the archaeologist is the poorer. If we choose to be mathematical about it we might formulate the situation thus: the luck of the archaeologist is in inverse ratio to that of the ancient man. However, settlements do not always come to violent ends. The constant dumping of refuse tends to raise the street level, a process that can still be observed in many existing communities of the Near East. I have been particularly impressed by this process as I saw it going on in Mosul. If much rubbish is thrown out of doors, the street level may rise as much as several feet in the course of a generation. Then there is the phenomenon of rebuilding: when someone decides to replace his roof, the old roof may be thrown down onto the street, so that the latter rises appreciably and suddenly.

After a town is destroyed or abandoned, the surface tends to be levelled off more through the agency of the people who come to rebuild it than by dust or shifting sands. Jeremiah recognized this principle when he wrote: 'And the city shall be rebuilt *on its tell*.' He knew that the cities of Judah would be destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar was about to overrun the country; but he prophesied that, as before, their descendants would rebuild the Judean cities on their ancient mounds. He too uses the word *tell*, the word still in use in Arabic. But this principle remained unrecognized (and the Bible passage, misunderstood) by Occidental scholars till Schliemann's time, well on in the nineteenth century.

But why should people build on these ancient mounds? Well, it might be for sentimental reasons, because this had been the spot where they or their forefathers had lived. Or, more commonly, for practical reasons. If access to a source of good water had made the site worthwhile in the first place, why should it not be so again? Then too, the added elevation of the mound was advantageous, for height facilitates defence in case of attack, as well as both drainage in the rainy season and sewage disposal throughout the year.

At this point it would be well to distinguish between a



*stratum* and a *phase*. A *stratum* is what remains of an occupation in which the structures are independent of those below and above. However, buildings are re-used to a considerable extent; and when old walls are appropriated by people living on new floor levels, the floor levels in question indicate phases of the same *stratum*. The keenness of the archaeologist in the field is judged not so much by his ability to distinguish strata as by acumen in distinguishing phases within the *stratum*. Sometimes there may be only ten or twenty years between an earlier and a later phase, and their identification may call for a good bit of subtlety.

As for the method of digging:<sup>15</sup> in the first place, the archaeologist should, if possible, start at the top of the mound. If, as is often the case, it is too large to excavate in its entirety, he should take as large an area as practicable, digging in it down to the floor level of each successive layer. To sink holes and dig trial trenches promiscuously only ruins a mound, and up-to-date archaeologists do not resort to such methods. Even attacking the mound from the side is not the best method, for on the side the stratification is usually obscure. Ideally, the excavator should expose a whole level at once and then proceed downward, level by level, but in practice most mounds are too large for such a lengthy and costly procedure. A model big-scale excavation in the Near East was that undertaken at Megiddo by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. If there had been any doubt in my mind as to the value of uncovering an entire city, that doubt was dispelled when I visited Megiddo and saw the complete Israelite city containing the now famous stables of Solomon. However, the Oriental Institute was able to undertake such a monumental project only because of the unusually large funds at its disposal. The depression years unhappily precluded the possibility of digging all the earlier Megiddo levels in their entirety. The singularly important early finds at Megiddo were made in limited areas of excavation.

Actually, stratigraphic excavation is not so simple as one might gather from the above generalizations. When one digs down to the ground level of a *stratum* and clears the entire *stratum*, one will usually meet with 'intrusions' that extend below the floor of the *stratum* in question; as is the case with

cellars, wells, cisterns, or graves. Furthermore, foundations are of necessity *under* the floor level to which they correspond. Intrusions are so important and interesting that a separate chapter (5) is devoted to them.

Both while the digging is going on, and also after the level is cleared with its ruined edifices still standing, a thorough study must be made. Exact notes must be made of the location and position of all the significant objects found, before they are removed for closer examination, for once a thing is removed from the soil, the evidence to be gathered from its context is lost. The field notes made in the course of the excavation are an important aspect of archaeological work. Delicate objects must be handled with special care and preserved by the best available methods. There is hardly such a thing as too full or too detailed a catalogue; too many pictures; too numerous or too precise drawings or plans; too many field notes or too much care in exhuming and preserving antiquities.

Clearing a level is not usually an easy task. Thus, suppose you are unearthing a mud-brick building whose roof and upper walls have long since fallen down. How are you to tell the collapsed from the standing parts of the wall? It is almost a fine art in some cases to tell the difference between the wall proper and the fallen debris, but there are certain standard ways of detecting which is which. For instance, bricks are laid in level courses; therefore when an excavator finds, in cutting through an unbaked brick mass, slanting or broken lines of mortar, they tell him that the brick is not in place but constitutes fallen debris and is to be removed. However, if the lines of mortar are horizontal, the bricks form part of a standing wall which is to be spared and the debris cleared from around it. Walls are sometimes faced with a film of plaster and when this film is vertical it is in place. Otherwise it indicates fallen debris. However, when, as occasionally happens, the wall was made of one clay mass and not of bricks in courses, the excavator must beware of mistaking the debris on one side of the plaster for the wall on the other.

Eventually the whole level is uncovered by removing debris and baring the standing edifices. Pavements and floors are distinguished if not by a special finish, at least by a degree of hardness, from the filling above them. A pavement faced with

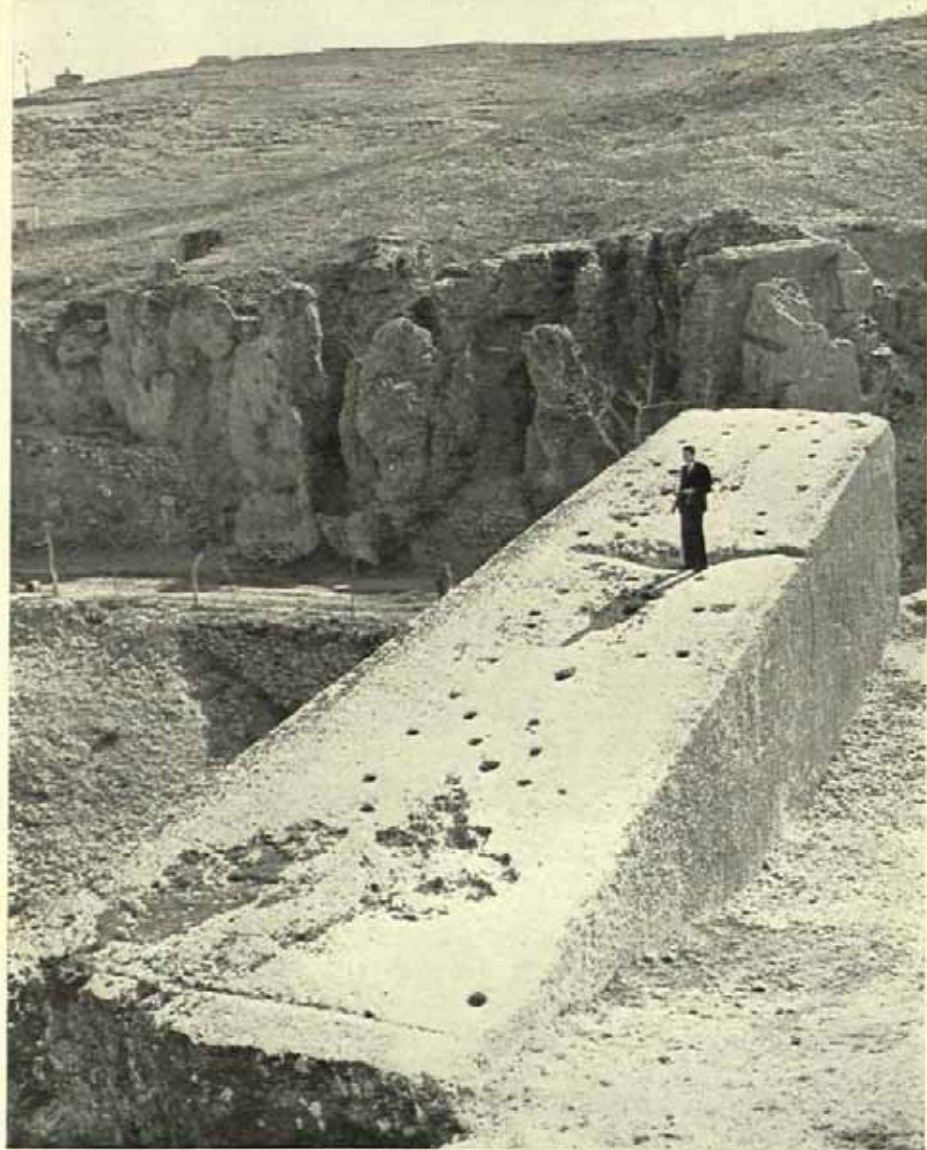


stone is, of course, quite easy to detect. Once the street or floor level is struck, it is well to clear the entire stratum down to this level with great caution, for vases and other delicate objects will be found on the floor (not suspended in the mid-air of antiquity). Work with heavy tools such as picks should be suspended and the floors should be cleared and walls traced by skilled labourers employing gentle means.

As has already been mentioned, after a level has been bared it must be utterly demolished in order to find the stratum below it. The excavator must therefore be very careful, because once he removes a layer in order to get at the one below it, the evidence of the upper layer is destroyed for all time, and only his records of it survive. In other sciences, such as chemistry and physics, the same experiment can normally be repeated; if the material in one test tube is somehow confused, unobserved or destroyed, the material can normally be duplicated and the experiment repeated in another test tube. But archaeological evidence, which cannot be duplicated and yet must be destroyed, calls for the utmost restraint and patience and scientific conscience in the excavator.

It is well to say a word about people who should go into archaeological work—and about those who should not. Play-boys should keep away. They do more damage than good. People who go out looking for a thrill, for the romance of the Orient and the glamour of antiquity, are more often than not liabilities to an expedition. After a month or two they tend to tire of the inescapable daily routine, and to long for a less exacting life. For people who have the necessary background training, however, the work will have an enduring attraction. Speak to people who have done archaeological field work and you will note that in nearly every case they want to get back to excavating or exploring as soon as possible—not so much for the glamour of exotic places as because they like the work and the mode of life. Archaeological opportunity should only be offered to and accepted by trained people with a mature interest in the subject.

Many diverse talents may go into the making of a useful archaeologist. One may be an expert photographer, or an expert draughtsman, or an expert at handling museum pieces. All these people have their place as specialists, under the leadership of



An ancient hewn monolith which had not been removed from the quarry at Baalbek.





*Photo: D. J. Wiseman*

ABOVE. Detail of the Temple of Bacchus, Baalbek. BELOW. A tell typical of those found in the Near East: the site of Haran, in 1951.

the director who plans the work and correlates the findings of the expedition. Everyone on the dig, regardless of his specialization, tends to take some active part in the field work, assisting in supervising the workmen and making field notes. When something that looks interesting is found, one must be prepared to roll up one's sleeves (if they are not rolled up already), take a knife, and dig the thing out oneself. But more than anything else an understanding of the nature, purpose, and significance of the work is necessary, so that one's interest will make an expedition lasting six months or more be interesting every moment of the time.

Some people are by temperament unfitted for archaeological work. The person who comes to work in the morning, or sits down to a meal, with a scowl on his face, will not wear well especially during the rainy season. One must be good and solid as a human being, as well as technically equipped in some way. But if one is prepared and fit for it, I cannot think of a better way to spend one's life. Before ending this digression on personal fitness, we might note some distinctions so as not to leave too absolute an impression. Men with not quite enough stability for excavation may have the modicum for exploration, while men a trifle too finicky for the rigours of exploring may not be too much so for excavating. The climate, duration of the campaign, and proximity 'to civilization' are among the many factors that should be considered when selecting members of the staff.

I shall illustrate stratigraphy from the excavations at three well-stratified sites: at Tepe Gawra and Tell Billa in Assyria near Nineveh and at Tell Beit Mirsim in Judea.

Before excavating a mound, one must secure the right to dig there. We were very fortunate in the case of Tepe Gawra, for it was the property of an enlightened Moslem of Mosul who donated it to the expedition for the sake of science. You often hear of Oriental avarice; but I have been more impressed by Oriental generosity. Indeed, Tepe Gawra, like Tell Billa, lies in a very fertile part of Iraq and is agriculturally profitable; and yet the owner of Tepe Gawra refused any monetary recompense. That simplified things immensely, for negotiations for the purchase or lease of mounds are often very difficult, not so much because of the money involved as because of certain



human complications about which we shall have more to say.

Tepe Gawra was abandoned by the end of the fifteenth century B.C. because by that time the twenty-odd successive levels had gradually converged till the top came to a point capable of holding just one building: a watch tower. Sheer want of space fixed the later limit of Gawra's remarkable record of the march of time.

The three uppermost levels belong to the Hurrians, who have been becoming more and more important to the historian. They came into Mesopotamia in the second half of the third millennium and were a dominant ethnic element throughout the Near East during the second millennium B.C. It was largely through the Hurrians that Assyrian civilization affected the Hittites. Hurrians ruled the great Mitanni empire in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries. Scholars in America and Europe have been making great strides in interpreting the cuneiform texts in the Hurrian language that have been unearthed in Egypt, Canaan, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia.

The sixth level (from the top) was made of stone and surrounded by a town wall. The artistic objects found therein dated it to the period of the famous royal tombs discovered at Ur. So Level VI provided a fixed point for reckoning back in history. I might also add that Tepe Gawra, especially in the case of the upper half of the mound, was an acropolis rather than a complete city. Most of the people lived outside the walls and would take refuge inside only in times of siege. The municipal buildings, temples, and other important structures were within the walls, while most of the private dwellings lay outside.

Level VII had virtually no structures left but only pottery and small objects. When a level is without structures, it is usually because the foundations of the city above were laid with such thoroughness that the buildings in the layer below were destroyed. But Level VIII, fortunately for us, had been destroyed by fire, so that the walls were preserved to an unusual height; in one place (as mentioned above) to a height of four metres. Accordingly, such architectural features as windows and the true arch were attested for the first time in history. I do not mean to imply that they had never existed before this period, for certainly they must have come from somewhere, but every previous

excavation of such antiquity had yielded only the nether parts of the walls and therefore all such architectural features had been destroyed.

We found many arrowheads of obsidian and flint at this level. Base metals were not yet in use, for this was still the fourth millennium before the Bronze and Iron Ages. We found a mace head of basalt pierced so that a shaft could be placed through the hole; the weapon was to be used on the enemy's head. We also found an arsenal: a room filled with clay slingshots. The inhabitants had thus been expecting some trouble such as eventually did befall them. In order to assure themselves of a water supply in time of siege they had constructed a reservoir dug through 20 metres of earlier citadels and into virgin soil. It must have been very difficult to construct; it was hard enough for us to clear. But in spite of all their military and strategic precautions, their city was devastated by fire and became a 'story' in Tepe Gawra's skyscraper of history.

We found that Level VIII was divided into three phases. The difficulty of the subdivision of a stratum into phases is that, in a given period, some structures may be re-used while others are replaced. Thus a given occupation may be partly a phase of the preceding settlement and partly a new stratum. Such was actually the case in what we decided to call the 'phases' of Level VIII.

Underneath the *a*, *b*, and *c* 'phases' of Level VIII, we found the ground plan of a temple in Level IX. There was nothing primitive about it; it was symmetrical, well thought out, and well executed, and in its day must have been quite handsome. The façades, niches, and recesses and plastered surface added to its beauty.

Below, in a level we decided to call XI*a*, we found an entirely different school of architecture, represented by a round house with a very interesting and varied arrangement of the rooms. Whether this round house belonged to some regular 'school' of architecture or whether it came into being on the site because the ancient architects decided to follow the circular contour of Tepe Gawra, we do not know. In no case does the student of Gawra's architecture complain of monotony.<sup>15\*</sup>

Among the small finds in Level XI were many seal impressions. This was before the time of writing, and to indi-



cate ownership personal seals were stamped on clay. An animal appearing frequently on these seals was the salugi. It is a dog of the greyhound type still common in the Near East. Fortunately for the salugi, it is not classed as a dog in Arabic. The dog is considered an unclean animal, and is taboo. Dogs are not to be taken into the house nor do the Arabs treat them as pets or companions. But the salugi is considered a different animal, just as we consider canines like the fox, jackal, or wolf as animals that are not dogs in the sense that poodles or spaniels are. So the salugi is kept in the house and fondled, clothed in winter, and is his master's companion especially while hunting. The Gawra seals throw the history of the salugi back to the fourth millennium B.C. in Assyria.

From Level XII to Level XVII the cities show a mixture of cultures, being a kind of blend of the earliest culture of southern Babylonia, known as the Obeid, and of the Halaf which precedes the Obeid in Assyria. For present purposes I need say no more about the importance of a site like Tepe Gawra; it ought to be evident even from these few remarks.

I have many pleasant and amusing reminiscences of the people among whom we lived and whom we employed at Tepe Gawra. The near-by village is called Fadhiliya and in 1934-35 our living quarters were situated in this village. We used to pay our men at odd intervals, for we did not want to carry the money from the bank at Mosul so regularly that highwaymen could predict the occasion and conveniently meet us en route. We would announce a pay time suddenly, whereupon there would be a great to-do. The men, of course, trusted us and did not mind if they did not have a pay day in three weeks or more; but still pay day meant lots of joyous excitement for Fadhiliya. We would arrange the money on the table, form the men into line, get out our records, and pay them off. One feature of pay day was *baksbeesh*, the usual tip to men who had done their work well. One man had been taken on the staff because he was related to the mayor, a phenomenon that can happen in more than one part of the world. His work was inferior. One day when his turn came to be paid, he said, 'Sahib, don't I get any *baksbeesh*?' 'Well,' I said, 'I'd love to give you some, but I don't think your work warrants it.' 'But', said he, 'I am your nearest neighbour.' 'And what has that to do with it?' I asked. 'Well, you see,' he

replied, 'I live in the adjoining house; and whenever I wish, I can see all that is going on in your courtyard and I have never breathed a word of it to anyone.' I gave him his *baksbeesh*. I suspect he was alluding to some 'shocking' scene like men and women dining at the same table or maybe even dancing together. But he gave the natives and us such a good laugh that we paid him his hush money gladly.

On another occasion Fethi, the foreman, came to me. He is one of the most intelligent men I have ever worked with. Field archaeology in under-developed countries soon teaches one that intelligence and education do not necessarily go together. These people have the same range of intelligence as we. It is after all only accident of birth that has placed them in Iraqi villages where people get no schooling, and that has placed us in a country where nearly everyone is literate. Fethi had got involved in a fight on account of one of his two wives. When a wife there 'walks out' on her husband, she does not go home to mother, but to father; and since this wife of Fethi had no living father, she went home to brother. Brother happened to be our day watchman, who guarded the excavation on Sundays, holidays, and when it rained; an easy and coveted job fetching double pay. After his sister came to him complaining of Fethi, her husband, the two men got into a brawl, after which the brother went off to the mound to take up his post as watchman. Fethi came to me and said, 'Sahib, I have always served you faithfully, and I am willing to do anything in the world for you. Now I have one favour to ask, the first I have ever asked of you: Please fire my brother-in-law.' 'Indeed, I should like to oblige you', I said, 'for I am not exactly fond of him myself. But we Frankish men [they have been calling occidentals 'Franks' since the Crusades] have a code whereby we act without prejudice. So unless your brother-in-law is remiss in his duties, I cannot discharge him. But I will do this for you: let us take the automobile and drive out to the mound and see whether your brother-in-law is perchance negligent.' We did so and then as we walked up the mound, we heard the brother-in-law snoring, for he had been exhausted by the fight. I went up and shook him awake, and said, 'We are not paying you for sleeping here. Thieves might have come and stolen all our equipment while you slept. You are fired.' As his hapless brother-in-law walked off the



mound, Fethi, with a beatific look, raised his eyes and hands toward heaven and in gratitude and adoration cried out: 'Allah is a good God!'

A mufettish or government inspector was assigned to our excavation. He was a 'gentleman of the old school', in his middle fifties, who had left his wife and two grown-up sons in Baghdad for the winter. So here he was, a grass widower, spending all his money on liquor in Mosul, the big city, which is just as wicked today as was its predecessor Nineveh in antiquity. The villagers distrust their city brethren and dislike their 'godless' ways. Villagers are mostly good Moslems and disapprove of wine bibbing, which is permitted to the faithful only in Paradise. The mufettish never could save any money and yet he greatly admired several of the local marriageable girls (which means those from 12 to 15 years old in the East) and wanted to marry at least one of them. The difficulty was that none of the fathers would marry off a daughter on credit; so our inspector was a very unhappy man.

Another site in the neighbourhood was Tell Billa. It was unfortunately owned by many different people and it was therefore difficult to buy or rent any considerable area for excavation. One section owned by the church in a neighbouring town could be bought outright, which we did. Accordingly we did not have to spend our time filling it in afterwards to render it ready for cultivation again. Other areas had to be acquired from less agreeable owners.

Much of the soil just below the surface was honeycombed with tombs of Persian periods and underneath that we found a level datable to the Achaemenian period, which period was terminated by Alexander the Great. However, the Achaemenian level was not found throughout the mound. Tell Billa is unusually large, and the stratification is not uniform in all parts. The situation is quite different at Tepe Gawra, where all of the limited space was utilized in all the strata.

Under the Achaemenian occupation were two Assyrian settlements, one in the ninth, the other in the thirteenth century B.C., corresponding to two distinct strata. In the earlier we chanced upon clay tablets; this discovery is the more important because texts of this Middle Assyrian period are relatively rare. Among other things they gave the name of Tell Billa as

Shibaniba, a city long known from cuneiform inscriptions. One of the city gates of Nineveh is named after Shibaniba.

The third level was Hurrian, corresponding in time and in culture to the top three levels of Tepe Gawra. One of the objects found at this Hurrian level was a model votive shrine, made of little bricks with a different figure incised on many of the bricks. It had collapsed, but was restored from the position in which the bricks were found.

A seal cylinder seemingly found in the Hurrian level taught us a valuable lesson. At the time of discovery (1931) we thought that since it had been found at that level it was accordingly to be dated in the second millennium B.C., or slightly before. Now, however, it turns out to belong to the period of Uruk in the fourth millennium B.C. This is certain from stratified remains in Babylonia. Thus it turned out to be an ancient seal preserved as an heirloom for about 1500 years before it was apparently buried in Level III! The phenomenon of heirlooms should never be lost sight of in the case of durable, precious objects, for such things may be handed down from generation to generation even for thousands of years—witness our museums today. All things being equal, when a stratum is destroyed or abandoned, nothing in that stratum is later than the time of the destruction that buried the stratum, though there is no limit to how much *earlier* certain objects may be. Most of the objects are roughly contemporary with their architectural surroundings; heirlooms are older.

Level V at Tell Billa corresponded to Level VI at Tepe Gawra, and below that there were several prehistoric levels; but Tell Billa as a whole is not to be compared with Tepe Gawra as a site going back deep into the past.

The most dangerous crisis I ever experienced in the course of all my expeditions took place at Tell Billa in December, 1932, and January, 1933. The Moslem fast of Ramadan fell at that time, and the religious problem became acute, as it always does during Ramadan. Most of the natives in our village were Yezidis or 'Devil-worshippers', whose religion is calculated to propitiate Satan. They hold that since God is all-good, He is incapable of any evil, and therefore requires no prayer. God is therefore to be loved but not worshipped. Satan, however, being purely bad, must be constantly appeased. This appease-



ment policy is hardly so Satanic as some more recent Occidental varieties, and none of us archaeologists found anything objectionable in these Devil-worshippers, in our dealings with them. However, their Moslem neighbours do not feel the same way. To be sure, Moslems and Yezidis usually get along well enough except during Ramadan when the Moslems, irritated by their arduous fasting, become pugnacious. Theology tends to become very dogmatic on an empty stomach. We therefore used to separate our workmen in Ramadan according to faith: Moslems in one area, Christians and Devil-worshippers in another. One day in December I was conducting the work at Tell Billa when I heard shots, and soon a couple of horsemen came galloping down from the near-by hills announcing that two Yezidis had been killed by Kurdish Moslems. Not being fully initiated into the institutions of the land, I expected open war to follow. My foreman, however, allayed my fears by informing me that two killings at this time of year were routine matters. One year the Yezidis kill two Kurdish Moslems, while the next year the Kurdish Moslems kill two Yezidis. Therefore there would be no more killings for another year; at least not from this particular feud. But the following day some Yezidis looted some Moslem shops in order to express their resentment. So the next day the Moslems showed their indignation by breaking into a Yezidi shrine and destroying a door and some of the cult objects. On the third day, we found the Qoran from the Mosque torn and strewn upon a dung heap. At this point we decided to suspend the excavations, for there was no telling what might happen next. Anyway the labourers themselves wanted to be on hand to defend their homes if necessary. A couple of nights later, at about three in the morning, our butler came to my bedside and with many apologies for disturbing me, reported that Kurdish tribesmen were gathering on Jebel Bashîqa, the ridge just above our village, and were apparently going to strike at dawn. They were almost certain to loot our quarters for the gold and precious objects that we had found or, what was more in the way of truth, the valuable objects they imagined we had found. For the town it meant fire and the sword. I rubbed my eyes and we held a 'council of war'. We decided to pick two expert riders and mount them on black horses so that they would not readily be seen in the dark, and send them by different roads

to Mosul in the hope that one at least would get through in time to bring military aid from Mosul. Meanwhile, we stood on the roof to see developments. There was just one thing I did resent about the situation, and that was to see the encampment of Bedouin not far from our house just outside the village, sitting calmly on their haunches waiting to share in the loot as soon as the Kurds came down to attack us. I felt it was not a neighbourly way of acting. But the chief instinct of the Bedouin is to loot when the looting is good, and you have to pardon him for it as you forgive a cat for killing mice.

I do not want to dramatize the situation; nor can I see any reason either to exaggerate or underestimate the danger we were in. The fact is that an hour before the Kurds were to strike, an R.A.F. plane came flying low over the village, striking terror into the hearts of the Kurdish tribesmen, who have a great respect for military planes, especially when they fly low. Half an hour later armoured cars—another modern machine, the purpose of which the Kurdish tribesman thoroughly understands—occupied the town till the end of Ramadan, and even a while after, to keep the peace. Neither that year nor on subsequent campaigns did we have any more trouble or need of help. In passing, let me say we had many reasons to be grateful to the R.A.F.; for taking aerial photographs for us, and on that occasion for protecting us from pillaging and fire, and for other kindnesses too numerous to mention.

The stratigraphic method may also be illustrated from the excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim. We had to rent the land there, and there was no end to the negotiations and discussions and quibbling that went on beforehand. The tell is owned by a whole clan, and to rent even an acre of agriculturally inferior land might require the consent of fifty to a hundred stubborn Arabs. Yet such transactions had to be done before we could begin to dig.

Tell Beit Mirsim has at least nine distinct levels, each terminated by violent destruction, so that all are sharply distinguishable from the levels below and above. The earliest destruction happened about 2100 B.C.; the latest probably in 588 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar devastated Judah. The lowest level, designated as J, was quite fragmentary, its only remains being potsherds found in crevices and caves in the bedrock.



Level H (the letter I is omitted lest it be confused with the Roman numeral) probably had a town wall as indicated by a massive structure built under another immediately above it. G and F were culturally almost indistinguishable though stratigraphically quite distinct. F had re-used the town wall of G, widening and strengthening it. E and D belong to the Hyksos period (in the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries). This was the first time this period could be divided on stratigraphic evidence into an earlier and a later subdivision, thus enabling us to refine our knowledge of the culture of the Hyksos age. For instance, in E a house was built with a line of three wooden columns, on stone bases, upholding the roof of the main room. The house was re-used in the next period, but the columns were removed, the bases covered, and an open-court type of house displaced the old colonnaded house whose chief room had been roofed.

A good many small objects were found in all these levels. For instance, in the Hyksos level we found a figure of a goddess with a serpent entwined around her. We discovered gaming pieces, showing how the people amused themselves. We unearthed various kinds of art objects, including quite good figures of animals incised on bone.

In Level C there were two phases separated by destruction debris. In the earlier phase there were certain Mycenaean sherds that were not found in the upper level, but most of the ceramic types were common to both phases.

B and A were Israelite levels, marked by quite a few destructions. One was doubtless the destruction by Sennacherib, who devastated Judah in 701. The town was never rebuilt after the destruction dealt by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 B.C.

For the latest Israelite city we had a complete layout in the excavated area, including the city wall, fortifications, city gates, private dwellings, and even industrial establishments such as wine presses (which later disappeared from the land, since good Moslems do not make or consume alcoholic drinks). The chief industry, however, had apparently been the weaving and dyeing of wool, for we found many loom weights, spindle whorls and dye vats. From the standpoint of religion, it was interesting to find that the Israelite houses had many Astarte figurines proving that the Hebrew common people in their popular religion gave

their prophets good reason for complaining. Officially, as we shall see in a later chapter, the Judeans were worshipping Yahweh, and not the goddess of fertility. The fact that our churches do not sanction astrology, fortune-telling, and other superstitions does not prevent an astonishing number of our fellow citizens from subscribing to astrological journals or from resorting to palmists, crystal gazers, and spiritualists, in plain defiance of Scripture. Similarly, the Judeans, though officially worshippers of Yahweh and Yahweh alone, made a place for the popular, unsanctioned practices of the times, and so we uncover their Astarte figurines connected with the fertility cult.

Among the objects discovered was a stone censer, of about 700 B.C., the best of its interesting type found so far. We found one piece of it early in the season, another a couple of weeks later in another part of the mound. The two parts dovetailed and formed a single piece. The bowl of the censer was carved in the shape of a lion's head. The priest apparently blew on the incense through the stem leading to the bowl. The construction was essentially the same as the modern smoking pipe.

The destruction of the city in 588 B.C. was so dreadful that adobe was burned to a bright red while limestone was slivered and even pulverized. After many centuries the burned stone combined with the annual rains to form a lime incrustation on the pottery and other objects, witnessing the intensity of Tell Beit Mirsim's last destruction.

The people now living about Tell Beit Mirsim show an interesting variety of cultures, existing side by side. Our labourers still live in the near-by caves during the summer months. Other tribes wander about pitching their tents; and still others live in village houses. It is a wonderful human experience to be an archaeologist in the Near East; if for no other reason than to get a sense of perspective and to realize that there are states of culture besides our own, and that our ways of living are not the only ones. Field archaeology simultaneously teaches us about mankind in time and place.

Before leaving the subject of Tell Beit Mirsim, I should like to tell some of my experiences among the troglodyte Arabs there. As I confessed in the first chapter, I often allowed myself to be inveigled into the practice of quack medicine. At Tell Beit



Mirsim I conducted an out-of-door clinic where I treated scores of patients daily. Eye infections are particularly rife and often lead to blindness in one or both eyes. By administering a ten per cent solution of argyrol I was able to clear up many cases of conjunctivitis within ten days or two weeks. A father with several children came to the 'clinic' so that I might treat those of the children who had eye infections. To clean up the children for the 'doctor', he wiped the eyes of the infected children with a corner of his robe and then, for good measure, wiped the eyes of the healthy children with the same corner. There was no point in telling him about germs. Instead I remarked that pus was full of tiny jinn that caused eye disease. This intelligible doctrine was spread throughout the community with good results.

For a while I was dispensing castor oil for those who needed a laxative. However, rustic Arabs are so fond of the flavour of castor oil that great multitudes began to clamour daily for a dose of what they call *esb sborba* 'the drink (par excellence)', rather than *zeit el kbirwa*, which is the correct word for 'castor oil'. I determined that something radical had to be done when I detected men getting back into line for a second dose. To my relief, I discovered that Arabs abhor epsom salts, which accordingly was substituted for castor oil in my *materia medica*.

I had a supply of iodine for applying to the slight wounds that are inevitable in the course of manual work. Soon I discovered that the men were fond of having iodine on them. The reason seems to be its resemblance to henna which they put on their finger nails and elsewhere, as well as on the bodies of their sheep, for warding off misfortune and disease. However, I did not realize how much they prized iodine, until one day an Arab asked to have some of it put on him. I asked him where the wound was. When he told me he had no wound and I informed him that only injured men were entitled to iodine, he walked away and returned in a few minutes with a generous gash in his hand. He thereupon got his iodine plus a sermon on folly.

By doctoring the natives I learned of all sorts of curious customs. For example, a Bedouin boy came to me to see what I could do for his ankle, which had a hemispherical chunk neatly burned out of it. Upon inquiring how on earth he had got such a

burn, he told me he had been greatly fatigued by a round-trip to far-off Jerusalem on foot. Upon returning he resorted to this old Bedouin cure for acute weariness: he placed some tinder on his ankle and set a live coal on the tinder. The coal burned through the tinder and into his flesh, whereupon all his fatigue disappeared and new life entered his weary frame. Luckily the burn was fresh and uninfected. I kept it dressed clean, and by the end of the summer his ankle was safely healed though of course permanently scarred.

My favourite labourer at Tell Beit Mirsim was a powerful fellow named Isa. His strength earned him the post of rock-crusher. When the men would come upon rocks too large to move, Isa would crack the rocks with a sledge-hammer. During an earlier campaign at Tell Beit Mirsim, Isa had tried to intimidate the men into paying him part of their wages for 'protection'. To establish his authority, he banded them together and demanded a general increase in pay, shouting: 'I am sheikh over all these men!' Dr Albright, refusing to recognize Isa's claims, retorted: 'You are not a full-fledged sheikh but merely a half [-baked] sheikh.' Whereupon the men laughed and deserted Isa. Isa walked away in shame but some time later apologized and was reinstated. He never again misbehaved. He told me that cave life in the summer was quite to his liking but he did not fancy spending the winter with the clan. Instead he committed a minor crime, such as stealing a camel, late every autumn and thus managed to be jailed. Isa was strongly pro-British. He related how terrible conditions were under the Turks, when jails were lice-ridden and cold, in which edible food was only obtainable by wealthy inmates whose servants brought them dainties from home. 'But the English', said Isa, beaming like a grateful child, 'have made jail a pleasure. The cells are clean, the food is fine, and the prisoners get meat several times a week. Each of us has two changes of clothes, one of which is always freshly washed. Instead of confining us to our cells, the English see that we get enough fresh air and exercise. Ah, Khwajah, the English rule well and I look forward to another pleasant winter in their prisons.'

Another of the many notable characters at Tell Beit Mirsim was our night watchman, who had earned the coveted title of Hajji ('Pilgrim') because he had made the sacred pilgrimage to



Mecca. It amused us to hear how Hajji had attained the respected rank of 'Pilgrim'. During the first world war, the Turks came to the district in search of men for the cavalry. Hajji was conscripted and his company was forced to go to Mecca on a military assignment. Thus may a man have sanctity thrust upon him!

## Graves and Other 'Intrusions'



DESPITE A WORD of warning in the discussion of stratigraphic excavation, we have perhaps given the impression that excavation consists of merely uncovering stratum after stratum, like taking layers off a layer cake. It is, of course, not so simple as all that, for a mound, having been constructed largely by the accidents of history, cannot be expected to consist of neat, even layers one on top of another. In the science of stratigraphy one must use great caution, for sometimes an object of a much later period may be found in an earlier level. One common reason for such mishaps is the fact that certain animals, especially moles, may dig holes from the top of a mound through several earlier levels, so that coins or small objects may fall through to plague the excavator who encounters them in a lower stratum. In addition to falling, objects may even rise above their level. Potsherds in loose soil are not unusually forced upward, particularly after heavy rains, so that at times such objects intrude at a *higher* level than that to which they properly belong. The rule we must always bear in mind is that 'one swallow does not make a summer', and that the fact that an isolated object is found at a certain level means little or nothing by itself. Inferences from individual objects must be made with the greatest caution, and only when many facts corroborate one another can we be justified in drawing broad conclusions from their context.

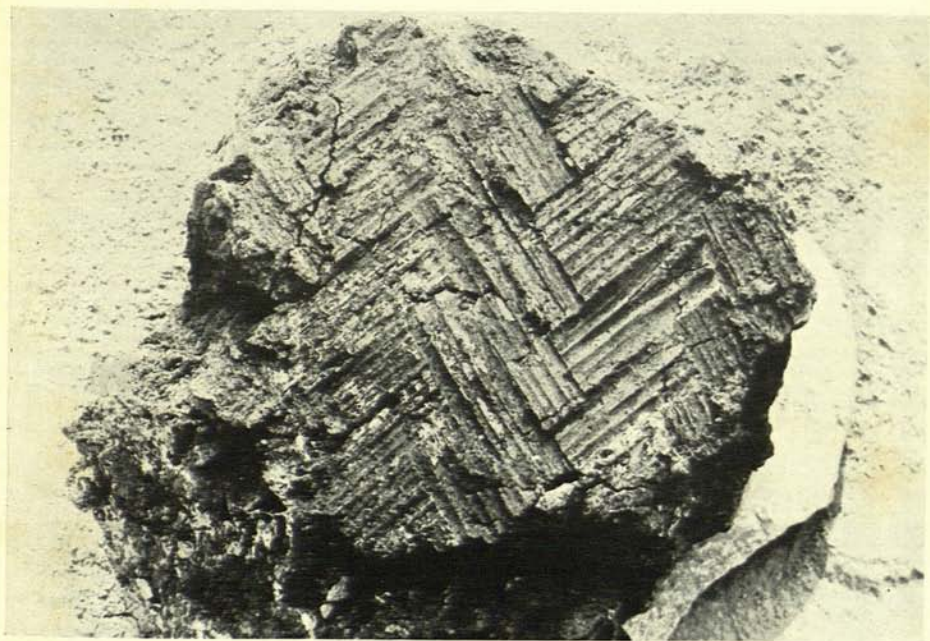
In one sense intrusions are inevitable. For while stratigraphic excavation consists essentially of digging down to the floor level and clearing all the structures on a given floor or street, this is obviously not the whole story. A moment's reflection would tell us that the foundations of every structure are always below the floor level, to say nothing of such things as pipes installed beneath the pavement to carry off sewage. So quite a few features of a city are necessarily below street level.



Indeed, a good catch question to stump a beginner in archaeology is: To what stratum may an object belong if it is found five inches below the floor? The answer is, of course, that it need not belong to the level below the floor but instead to the one above, since the foundations must have been dug at least five inches below street level.

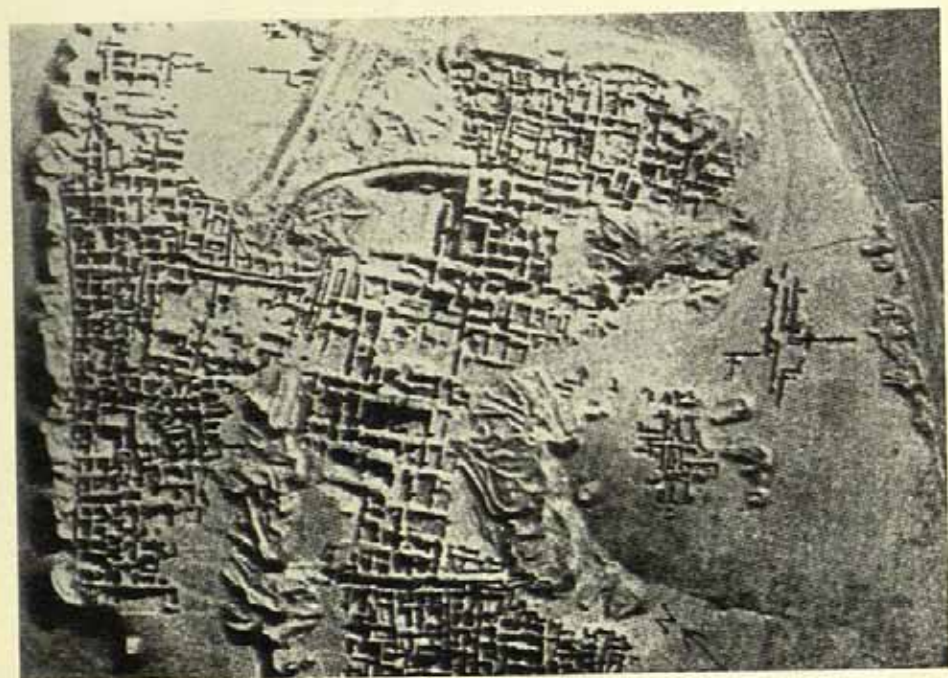
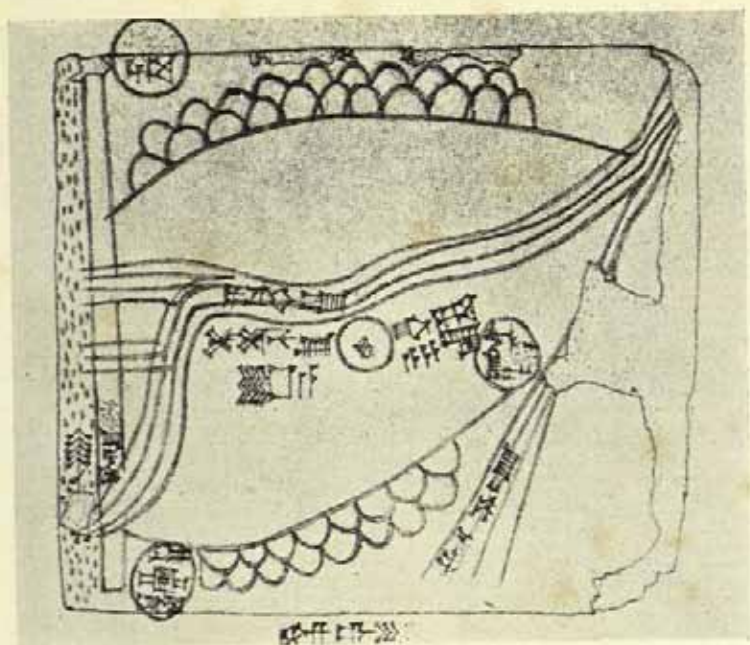
In order to understand the problem of the archaeologist, one must also comprehend the mode of life of the ancient inhabitants. In those blessed days before the invention of aerial warfare, a town wall was ordinarily enough to keep enemies out. Indeed a 'town' or 'city' (as distinguished from a 'village') was a settlement surrounded by a wall. It was not necessarily a great centre of population and thus some 'villages' were larger than certain 'towns'. The 'town' being protected by a surrounding wall afforded a haven for the inhabitants from the neighbouring villages in times of siege. During such crises there would inevitably be a heavy concentration of people within the walls, and in order to withstand a siege successfully the inhabitants would require an adequate supply of water and food. Under such conditions surface space within the town would obviously be at a premium, so that water and food would have to be stored in underground cisterns and pits. For this reason, every ancient town I know of in the Near East has cisterns for holding water, and grain pits for storing food, sunk down into earlier strata. These storage pits and cisterns constitute the most extensive type of intrusion that confronts the excavator, and while they extend down through earlier towns, they belong to the upper level from which they were dug. When one speaks of stratigraphic excavation, therefore, one does not mean stratigraphy in the strict sense of what a levelling machine might tell us, but rather excavation of the complete settlement occupied at a given time. In other words, if you are digging a town of 2000 B.C. and encounter a cistern or pit intruding into earlier levels, that intrusion must be cleared at the same time, for what you are endeavouring to do is to clear the complete habitation of a particular period, and a levelling machine would be quite misleading under those circumstances.

But how does the excavator realize that he has come across an intrusion into an earlier level? There are numerous criteria that show him this: for one thing, a discolouration of the soil



ABOVE. An Amarna Tablet sent by the Pharaoh to the Governor of Ascalon.  
BELOW. The pattern of a reed mat left in clay.





ABOVE. A map from Nuzu showing hills, streams, and hamlets. BELOW. An aerial view of Nuzu.

often indicates a structure which is not the same as those round about. The archaeologist will then have to instruct the labourers to dig straight down till they reach the bottom of the intrusion. There are also other criteria, for store pits and cisterns tend also to have a lining of plaster or stone to keep them waterproof or to enable them to preserve organic matter.

Even intrusions, however, are subject to certain stratigraphic rules. For example, an intrusive structure must antedate the nearest unbroken floor level lying directly above it. Accordingly, the excavator must pay strict attention to the state of even the most unimpressive-looking floors so as to record their bearing on possible, but unforeseen, intrusions below. For once a floor is removed, the archaeologist has only his records as evidence.

To take an example of a major intrusion: At the eighth city at Tepe Gawra (counting from the top), we came across a huge pit. It so happened that it went down twenty metres (over 65 feet) through all the earlier cities into the virgin soil beneath the mound. Obviously, the law of gravity has it that anything dropped into space will fall until something solid stops it; therefore the excavator is not going to find much till he gets near the bottom of a pit. That particular pit at Gawra was a cistern used for storing water. Since the objects dropped into it in antiquity had fallen to the bottom, we had to dig through nearly twenty metres of hard debris before the objects that had been dropped into it began to be found. This means that such work is dull for a long time; and, I may add, dangerous for the labourers unless careful precautions are taken. The usual method is to erect a tripod or some other sort of structure over the pit so that buckets may be raised and lowered on wheels or pulleys. Thus the soil is removed and the bottom is reached, where the interesting objects lie. We pay the men more than the usual wages for such arduous, routine work, and every precaution is taken to ensure safety, for if anything were dropped from twenty metres above, a person below might be critically injured. The pottery and other objects found at the bottom of the cistern belonged not to the level flush with the bottom but to the point where they were originally made and used and from which they had been dropped.

This brings up another problem that we have not yet considered: the problem of dumping. When the ancients constructed



that pit and dug through many earlier cities, they threw the debris over the side of the mound as they cleared the pit. Assuming for the sake of simplicity that they did all their dumping in one spot, that would mean that what came latest would be on the bottom while the deeper (and therefore earlier) debris would be on top; so that their artificial mound of debris would have the exact reverse of the chronology of the natural mound: in the mound, the earliest would be lowest, but where the dumping was done the latest would be lowest. And incidentally, not only the ancients did that, but we archaeologists do it all the time. One must therefore beware of applying the rules of stratigraphic excavation uncritically.

Intrusions unfortunately tend to play havoc with the architecture below. This pit at Tepe Gawra damaged buildings of all the earlier cities beneath so that the architect is not usually gladdened by such intrusions. For example, in the third city at Tell Beit Mirsim a great part of Level C was seriously damaged by cisterns and grain pits sunk from the Israelite levels.

The most widely publicized type of intrusion is the grave. However, a burial ground or necropolis need not be intrusive. Thus the cemeteries of the average modern city involve no intrusion into earlier cultural levels. Nor is there any cultural intrusion in rock tombs like those in the famous Valley of the Kings, in Egypt. Such Egyptian tombs are geological but not archaeological intrusions and therefore do not concern us.

When we have to do with unknown or little-known cultures, it is especially desirable to excavate stratified towns before the necropolises associated with them. In digging stratified cities the archaeologist gets a chronological sequence for the cultural relics unearthed, but he is far less certain of the chronological order of graves. But since funerary objects are for the most part objects of daily life, we can date them from the stratified towns with which they are associated. Such funerary objects commonly include vessels for holding food or drink; finery, jewellery and toilet articles; tools and weapons; musical instruments, and so forth. At Tepe Gawra there was one pathetic little grave with the skeleton of a child holding a clay flute in its tiny hand. The future life was essentially a replica of life on earth, and therefore unrobbed graves tend to be filled with objects of daily life.

To take a few specific illustrations of graves: at Tell Billa

in northern Assyria, as we have noted, the top part of the mound was filled with those intrusive burials, mostly of Achaemenian and later Persian periods. Some of the graves are known as capsule burials in which the head and chest of the skeleton are covered by one large pottery jar, and the legs by another. Some of these capsule graves lay only a few inches under the modern surface of the mound. There are many other types of burial, classified according to structure. Some burials have special structures associated with them: actual mausoleums or sepulchres or tomb-structures in which the dead are laid. Sometimes people would dig down and appropriate an earlier building; or a part of it, merely supplementing it with the necessary walls to complete a burial structure. And for that matter there are also 'loose burials', where the body is simply wrapped in cloth or in a mat, laid in the soil, and covered with earth.

In the early part of 1932 I received a memorable assignment. While Sir Leonard Woolley was then conducting his last campaign at Ur he chanced to need the services of an epigraphist to read some of the Sumerian inscriptions he had found. I had the good fortune to be called to Ur from my post at Tell Billa and Tepe Gawra to do this work.

I went by car to the Great Zab River, where we had to ferry over that torrential stream to the village of Guweir on the other side. As we reached the river the driver pointed out the very spot where an Englishman had been murdered a few days before. The whole countryside was still talking of the assassination, of which I shall have more to say presently. The 'Berlin to Baghdad Railway' was not yet built from well east of Mosul to Kirkuk, and so from out in the desert to Kirkuk the railway termini were connected by automobile service, though the railway continued beyond Baghdad to Basra in the south. I took the train at Kirkuk, and, being an inexperienced train traveller in those parts, I had forgotten to bring blankets and found that the railway did not supply enough for comfort during the cold night. I was touched by the generosity of some Iraqians on the train who, seeing that I was not properly equipped with bedding, contributed enough blankets to keep me warm.

In Baghdad a rather amusing experience befell me. The Director of the Iraq Museum there was then Dr Julius Jordan.



My colleagues at Tepe Gawra—whether to tease me or not I do not know—sent a telegram to be delivered to me at the Museum, but when it arrived the name of the addressee had been altered from 'Gordon' to 'Jordan', and delivered to the Museum director. It read, 'Come back soon we miss you so', and was signed by the expedition. This naturally mystified Dr Jordan, whose contacts with our expedition had been rather official and of not-too-intimate a character. The mystery was solved to his great relief, when I appeared on the scene.

Between work on the texts that I was reading for Sir Leonard Woolley at Ur, I had the thrill of watching some of the impressive royal tombs come to light. One of the burials of the later period—the period known as the Third Dynasty of Ur (about 2028–1920 B.C.) was a building the quality of which is seldom matched in any modern building in Iraq. Even the modern royal palace outside Baghdad was not to be compared with this ancient tomb of the kings of old. We sometimes make the mistake of thinking that the passage of time means progress. It would perhaps be better if we rid ourselves of the word 'progress' altogether, for it may hide more truth than it reveals.<sup>16</sup>

But more interesting than these magnificent 'Ur III' burials were the older Sumerian burials (usually without any special structure) dating back to the Early Dynastic age, from about 2800 to 2300 B.C. These graves yielded finds of exquisite beauty; such as a helmet of gold, imitating the contour of the head with a full chignon behind, with every curl, wave, and even the individual hairs executed superbly by the ancient craftsman. There was a golden dagger in a sheath of gold filigree which has literally never been excelled to the best of my knowledge; not even in the finest museums in Europe, where you can examine western filigree work at its best, will you find anything to eclipse the quality of workmanship of this ancient Sumerian artist. Numerous harps, to accompany the dead in their future life, were found; the metal, shell, and stone parts were still preserved; and though the wooden parts had decayed they could be restored with certainty because the harps are so faithfully depicted by contemporary artists on imperishable stone.

Those who have seen in Philadelphia, London, and Baghdad the treasures discovered at Ur know how superb these objects

are. Even a cursory examination of the colour plates of Sir Leonard's publication convey a rich impression of the splendour. Nor is there anything primitive about this art. The sooner we disabuse ourselves of the false idea that the primitive is equivalent to the early in point of time rather than to the low in point of quality, the better we will prepare ourselves for a truly historical attitude toward art and general culture.

I remember, as Sir Leonard took me through the tombs under excavation, how carefully we had to tread lest we crush a golden object just under the surface. If we brushed away the soil with our fingers, gold and lapis-lazuli and cornelian would peer forth from the earth. It was fantastic to see such splendour coming from the ground. Even an archaeologist is not used to that kind of thing! It was one find in a thousand.

The burials there were so numerous that Sir Leonard had excavated 1,850 of them in a rather limited area, and those represented but a half or perhaps only a third of what had been there, for many others had been wholly or partly obliterated.

The method that Sir Leonard used to reconstruct a chronology of the burials is known as the 'group method'. He would not reckon with graves unless there were at least five superimposed one on the other. And only if the relationship of the five (or more) was such that none of the graves had been intruded upon in order to make room for another, would he use the grave group for establishing a chronology (paying strict attention to the objects found in each grave). Properly assuming that the lower was the earlier burial and by combining groups which overlapped in time, he skilfully attempted to establish a chronology based on stratigraphic evidence.

This is the opposite of the method devised by Sir Flinders Petrie, who, in the absence of sufficient stratigraphy, established sequence dates according to stylistic features of the finds. Thus he took as a criterion the 'wavy-ledge' handles on pottery vessels of the Early Bronze Age in Egypt and found that this handle got smaller and smaller until it became vestigial and eventually disappeared. The difficulty here was that without a starting or stopping point you could not tell which way the development proceeds. To use the language of biology: Without being able to fix one end of the development, Sir Flinders could not be sure whether the tiny wavy-ledge handle was rudimentary (i.e., the



beginning of the development) or vestigial (i.e., the end of the development). Luckily, Sir Flinders found the necessary bit of stratigraphic evidence to show it was vestigial. Essentially, then, Sir Flinders' sequence dating was stylistic; Sir Leonard's group method, stratigraphic.

Sir Leonard used an interesting system of rewarding his labourers. Paying *baksbeesh* to the men is a very important thing, for if they are not rewarded for valuable finds they may begin to steal. What he did was to divide his labourers into groups of one pick man, one shovel man, and a few basket boys; and each group was to share the rewards collectively. He placed enemies rather than friends together in these groups and since the whole group had to share the reward, one could try to steal from the others only at the risk of his head; the others would not put up with it. So by means of the very strong human factor of animosity, Sir Leonard managed, I think, to have very little stolen from him.

He found so much gold that it was impossible to reward the men fully according to its gold value. Sir Flinders Petrie has told me that he always weighed the gold and paid according to its sterling value, so that there would be no point in the men's stealing antiquities and going elsewhere to sell them. Sir Flinders happens to have found more gold at Tell el Ajjul (south of Gaza) than anyone else anywhere in Palestine, a fact which he attributed to this system of rewarding, gold for gold. I think that the method is indeed very effective, and might well be imitated by others wherever it is practicable.<sup>17</sup>

I might say here that the Oriental is to be trusted more than many of us might imagine. He has a great sense of honour. In 1927, on the closing day of that year's campaign at Ur, that now famous filigree dagger was found. It is of course priceless for its historical and artistic value, but even its monetary worth was obvious to every Arab on the site. Sir Leonard took the sheikh aside and addressed him something like this: 'You see that this excavation is not yet complete. We hope to return to it next year. You know and I know that it is full of gold. I will show you how full it is.' Here he scraped away a little of the soil and several gold beads fell out. Sir Leonard knew that the tribe would be on its honour to keep that site intact for him, but he did put secret markings here and there so that later he could

check whether it had been disturbed. When he came back the following year, nothing had been touched. Such are the standards of tribal honour among the Arabs. They feel that if they betray a trust they are unworthy to go on living. You can therefore appeal to their honour with complete confidence. I have never personally experienced a single case of a breach of honour among the Arabs.

At this point I wish to make a comment of appreciation of Sir Leonard's work. His field technique is superb. But apart from that, the finds that he has made at Ur are even more important than the rich finds made at the tomb of King Tutankhamen by Carter and Carnarvon. The latter discoveries, however splendid, did not revolutionize our knowledge of history or even of art, whereas what Sir Leonard Woolley found at Ur opened up a great and new chapter in the history of art, going back to that remarkable people, the Sumerians, of whom we are still learning much as the years go by and to whom even occidental civilization is indebted.

On my way back to Tepe Gawra and Tell Billa I had the pleasure of sharing a compartment in the train with M. André Parrot, the distinguished French archaeologist who subsequently made spectacular discoveries at Mari on the Euphrates. I had not yet been in France, and my knowledge of the French language was then limited to reading. M. Parrot at that time could not yet speak English. So we conversed for over ten hours in Arabic together—a remarkable linguistic experience for a Frenchman and an American.

I drove back from Baghdad to Mosul in a car with several Arab gentlemen and an Arab driver, and as we passed the ancient town of Erbil (the site of one of Alexander's great victories), our car began to show signs of motor trouble. We got to the town of Guweir before sundown, but the police officials there would not allow us to proceed across the Great Zab. That Englishman had been killed only a few weeks before, and the government was taking no chances with travellers. In vain did we ask the chief of police for special permission to cross the river. While our car was parked before the police station in the little mud-brick village, a sack of oranges that one of my fellow travellers was bringing to Mosul as a gift was stolen from the car. One of our party went up to the chief of police, pounded



his fist on the table, and said, 'It may interest you to know that I am a relative of the governor. Unless we see those oranges in the next five minutes, there will be a new chief of police here.' And within a few minutes the oranges were found and returned. I have never been able to determine whether the police of that village were super sleuths or just plain thieves.

We realized that we should have to spend the night there, and ordered supper and lodging at the 'tea house', which is not what its name might convey to Western ears. In that part of the world a tea house, far from being a place for ladies and occasionally their escorts, is a place where, in addition to the innocent idlers, the good-for-nothings gather to waste time, to gamble, and do various things that may include the plotting of a theft or even a murder or two. That tea house was full of sinister-looking men, with knives in their belts, muttering in their beards as they gambled and sipped their coffee and tea. But we had our supper, and very good it was with broth, chicken, rice, olives, Arab bread, and the like. We all ate in brotherly Eastern fashion, with our fingers, out of a common dish. We had no knives or forks but only spoons for the soup which we drank from a single bowl set before our party. After we had beguiled a part of the night in exchanging stories, we decided to go to sleep and stretched ourselves along the wall, letting the habitués enjoy themselves till morning if they wished. I lay with my head in one corner of the room while a young Arab of our party lay along the adjoining wall with his head toward the same corner. While the others slept he poured a tale of woe into my ears. He was, he said, a Christian, and therefore, unlike the Moslems, was allowed to see his fiancée's face before marriage. He had got two days' leave from his job in Baghdad to see her in Mosul, and at best he would have had less than one day with his beloved; but now, with this delay, he might not even have time to see her at all, or at most, which would be almost worse, he could see her only for a moment to say hello and farewell. He went off into a poetic tirade the like of which I had never heard. Only an Oriental could have uttered it. 'Do you think I am flesh and blood, my friend?' he queried. 'If you do, you are wrong; I am stone. Here is my dagger; plunge it into my breast and you will see that no blood will flow.' And so on, and so on, till I finally fell asleep. For all I know, he soliloquized all night.

For breakfast next morning we had native bread and tea and a pleasant mixture of honey and camel cream. And the bill for supper, lodging, and breakfast came to something under a shilling apiece.

Next morning I was back at Tell Billa and Tepe Gawra with my neighbours the Devil-worshippers. I had returned from the glamorous tombs of Ur to the less spectacular but no less interesting and even earlier graves at Tepe Gawra. I was to spend three winter campaigns at Gawra. It was during the last of these that I was walking one morning to the mound with our government inspector, the mufettish whom I have already mentioned. That day he was telling me that it was very generous of us to give him the same food that we ourselves ate (we sent trays out to him regularly), 'But', he said, 'I am not used to your sauces and your pies and your cakes and those delicacies of Paris and London and New York.' He picked up a handful of soil and let it run through his fingers. 'Do you see this dirt?' he asked. 'Well, this is whence I come. I am a son of this soil. And I don't want the cakes and pies of the capitals of the Occident. Just let me have some nuts and raisins and cheese and onions, for I can no longer bear your fancy fare.' I told him I would take his plea to Mr Charles Bache, the director, which I did. From then on the inspector got native food and everyone was happy.

When we got to the mound the inspector did as he always did, and as government officials are said to do in many other parts of the world, he fell asleep immediately; and his snores could be heard from one end of the mound to the other. But, also, as usual, he had made me promise to wake him up if anything interesting took place, and so I always did. This day it was not long before I had reason to wake him up, for we found an interesting infant burial, with a tiny skeleton curled up in an open bowl. At Gawra of the fourth millennium, infant burials were found under many buildings. At first we were inclined to think that this was religious infanticide, such as the familiar slaying of the first-born in order to give to the god the first fruit of the womb as well as of the soil. This would be very interesting, and it is a possibility. But the frequency of infant burials was more likely due to the generally high infant mortality which has always characterized those parts of the world



and which is taken for granted rather than viewed with alarm. The simple explanation is usually the better one. For while a religious or mystical explanation may be more attractive, the simple one is apt to be closer to the truth. When we chanced upon that infant burial, I woke the inspector, who came and looked intently at the little grave as it came to light under the nimble fingers of our labourers. I could see that he was deeply moved. He grew tenser and tenser and finally he went off into an oration that one could only expect from an Oriental. He burst forth, 'O babe, lucky art thou who hast died before thy time! Lucky art thou, who hast passed from this wicked world without seeing its misery and suffering. Lucky art thou who hast not beheld what we now see: the nations of Europe and Asia with swords and daggers drawn, about to hack one another to bits.' This was in 1935, four and a half years before the outbreak of the second world war and so you can see that even a lowly government inspector given to sleeping on the job might have some insight into the impending future of mankind.

Many of the Gawra skeletons were found in appropriated or partly appropriated structures of earlier levels. Some of the graves were unripped and yielded numerous objects of gold, electrum, and semi-precious stone. Notable is a hair ornament of ivory with four bands of gold and rows of semi-precious stones in three different colours. Several ivory combs identical in shape with present day pocket combs witnessed the truth of Ecclesiastes, who has pointed out for the ages that nothing is new under the sun.

The qualifications of the natives we employed in excavating graves are worthy of further mention. This task calls for delicate work, if the bones are not to be disturbed; or if the discolouration of the soil, which is usually all that is left of the mats the dead were wrapped in, is not to be destroyed beyond recognition. Those who work on graves are specialists, with a delicacy of touch that would be hard to improve on in any part of the world. Of course, they still need constant supervision, for you cannot leave even the best labourer on his own, no matter how loyal or intelligent or careful he may be. The excavator must always watch or assist the natives at their work, and as they uncover the grave by degrees, he must be there to take pictures or make sketches and field notes in order to record the exact

position of the body, its orientation, and all sorts of details whether or not he has any explanation for them at the time. There may arise the necessity of preserving some of the antiquities on the spot. The application of paraffin or some other substance may be indicated before a delicate antiquity is removed. Sometimes, too, skulls and other bones must be removed in some such special way so that they may later be examined by a physical anthropologist. When anything of interest or value is found, the labourer who discovered it is to get the reward, provided of course he did not damage it in the finding. As a rule the native specialist who clears the grave is not the one who first discovered it. That specialist receives higher pay for his skill, while the discoverer gets a reward for his luck, and observation and carefulness. Before leaving the subject of *baksbeesh*, let us note that while the archaeologist must forestall theft by giving a fair reward, he must also be on his guard against 'salting'; for in order to get *baksbeesh*, labourers sometimes bring an antiquity from outside and say they found it in the excavation. Usually it is easy to catch the culprit. For instance, one day a labourer handed me a corroded Turkish coin which he said he had just unearthed. Since he was digging fourth millennium soil without any intrusions from a later period, I fired him immediately. I did not explain why a nineteenth-century A.D. coin could not have come out of Level IX at Tepe Gawra. As far as the natives were concerned, I could detect their falsehoods by magic and so they did not try to 'salt' anything else on us that year, as far as I know.

One of the Gawra graves contained two bodies arranged in their original symmetrical position—face to face, and knee to knee. They probably died, and so were buried, at the same time. It is possible, of course, that the husband died and the wife was killed to accompany him into the next world but again we have no proof of this, nor do we know whether this custom, known in other parts of the world, prevailed here; for this was the only example we found of this type of burial, and it is gratuitous to build up a theory on an isolated fact.

In excavating graves such as those at Ur, where the excavator constantly finds interesting objects, where he can brush aside the soil and find red and yellow gold peering up at him from the earth, the greatness of the thrill imposes added restraint upon



him. For in this kind of work he must constantly curb his impulse to hurry from one discovery to another. He must exercise the greatest self-control, for such work must be done slowly if the evidence is to be preserved. The difference between the object found by an illicit dealer or by a thief and sold in the open market to a private collector or museum, and the object found by an excavator digging with scientific accuracy, is that the latter is associated with a context while the former is not. For historical purposes there is all the difference in the world.

## Glyptic Art



ART, IN THE BROAD SENSE of the sum total of man's handicraft, may be divided for practical purposes into two categories: (1) architectural and (2) movable units. The former category includes fortifications, temples, private dwellings, streets, tombs, cisterns, and other structures. The latter category is even more general, for it embraces a host of things ranging from needles to colossal statues. (Inscriptions are of such a specialized nature that they are treated in a class by themselves; and six full chapters will be devoted to them.) The movable units are best divided into (a) fine art and (b) artifacts. A product of fine art is usually made with primary regard for aesthetic quality and may or may not have a utilitarian purpose. We shall use 'artifact' in the sense of a movable man-made object exclusive of fine art. With artifacts, utility is regularly of primary consideration, aesthetic appeal being secondary or even absent. Utensils, weapons, tools, furniture, and the like are generally artifacts. Jewellery, sculpture, paintings, and the like are normally fine art.

In the ancient Near East, as we have noted, pottery is the most common, and archaeologically the most valuable, art object. In pre-Hellenistic Palestine, where there is a relative dearth of inscriptions and fine art, the study of ceramics has been refined to a remarkable degree. However, Mesopotamia and Egypt yield so much fine art and writing that archaeologists in those lands tend to pay less attention to the ceramics of well-attested ages except when the pottery under consideration is fine art.

Seals are more revealing and are intrinsically more interesting than pottery, or for that matter, than any other class of art in ancient Western Asia. Indeed their interest and the durability of the stone from which they are usually made explain the stratigraphic drawback of seals: their persistence as heirlooms. However, a non-intrusive seal is never later than its archaeo-



logical context, and so if the scholar is critical, he may use seals to good advantage.

Seals, of the stamp type, were in use early in the fourth millennium. Their invention resulted essentially from the possessive instinct of mankind (though seals were often used as phylacteries too). Thus, to show that a jar of wine or grain belonged to him, a man would cover the stopper of the jar with clay and impress his seal while the clay was still wet. Stamp seals remained in exclusive use during the Halaf period (in the early centuries of the fourth millennium) and probably during the succeeding age, known as the Obeid. It was apparently in the next, or Uruk, period that cylindrical seals came into being. The new shape was favoured by the added usefulness of having a seal that could be rolled without interruption for as great a distance as might be needed. This was not only desirable in the case of wide-mouthed storage jars but even more so in the case of storehouse doors that were to be sealed.<sup>18</sup>

The Uruk age was culturally quite fruitful in producing still other innovations that were profoundly to affect all the subsequent Sumero-Accadian periods. The most spectacular innovation was the ziggurat or stage tower which gave rise to the Bible legend of the Tower of Babel and many examples of which have been excavated in Mesopotamia.<sup>19</sup> But a still more significant contribution of the Uruk age was the invention of writing. This writing seems to have started out as a group of conventionalized pictures incised on seal cylinders. These pictographs were stylized into linear signs late in the fourth millennium. During the third millennium they were further stylized into cuneiform. During the three millennia that preceded the Christian era, contracting parties and their witnesses impressed their seals on millions of clay cuneiform tablets. The seal was tantamount to its owner's signature. It is interesting to note that the stamp seal is better suited for use on tablets than is the cylinder, because a little stamp takes less space, and on tablets space is usually at a premium. However, so great was the force of inertia that the cylinder continued to be the predominant type of seal, even for authenticating tablets, down to the Neo-Babylonian period, deep in the first millennium B.C., when the stamp eclipsed the cylinder, eventually expelling the usurper that had dominated the scene for almost three thousand years.

In its broad sense, 'glyptic art' includes all sculpture. Art historians, however, tend to restrict the term to the miniature sculpture of the seal cutter. Our discussion of glyptics will be limited to cylinders. The photographs tell most of the story. However, since the seals are not reproduced in colour, I should perhaps note that they are usually made of stone. Certain stones tend to be used in certain periods. For example, lapis-lazuli is often the material of cylinders in the early tombs at Ur but not in Babylonia and Assyria of the first millennium B.C. The reverse is true of chalcedony. In addition to numerous kinds of stone, metal, shell, bone, frit, and other materials are sometimes used. I should also call the reader's attention to the piercing down the middle of the cylinder to serve primarily for inserting the roller and perhaps secondarily for suspension on the cord around the owner's neck. To appreciate the skill of the ancient gem cutters we should remember that they were able to depict a wealth of detail even though the height of the seals is normally only between one and two inches and though the stone is often quite hard. The minuteness of the workmanship is the more striking because the ancient gem cutters did not apparently know of the magnifying glass.

The Iraq Museum in Baghdad has one of the finest and largest collections of Mesopotamian glyptics in the world. This collection is growing more rapidly than its rivals and it will doubtless eclipse those in the Louvre and British Museum that may possibly be larger at present. In 1935, the Department of Antiquities of the Iraq Government invited me to undertake the publication of the ancient seals in the Iraq Museum. The few months I spent at the Museum in Baghdad in 1935, before I had to return to America, were of course not nearly enough for me personally to make impressions of the three thousand seals and to have them photographed. It is due to the enlightened interest of Saty Beg, then the Director of Antiquities, and Abdu-r-Razzaq Lutfy Effendi, then the Curator of the Museum, that preliminary impressions were made, photographed, and sent to me with the result that I at least could study the material without delay. I had hoped (in vain, alas!) to return to Baghdad in order to make impressions and photographs that show a maximum of detail for every seal: such is the standard for scientific publications of art.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, with the kind per-



mission of Saty Beg, I was able to select some of the clearer photographs in my possession to illustrate glyptic art in this book. Because all these seals come from Iraq, the peripheral glyptic types peculiar to the surrounding lands are not represented.

Obviously I cannot treat the subject of Western Asiatic glyptics (or even of the Iraq Museum seals alone) in detail here. My aim must be more modest. I propose to describe a selection of seals arranged in chronological order and show how cultural history may be extracted from them.

At the outset we ought to recognize the fact that while the seals were used for the practical purposes of indicating ownership and of authentication, the seal cutters regularly tried to make an artistic creation with aesthetic appeal. Functionally, the seal needed only the distinctiveness that a few aimlessly scratched lines would provide (and there are scattered examples of such). But, then again, the function of the seal would in no way be impaired by artistic merit. Actually, beauty would normally facilitate the sale of the seal cutter's products.

Some of the seals reproduced here (such as Nos. 18, 19, 31, 32) have a beauty that transcends the taste of those for whom they were made and appeal even to us, though we be far off in time and place. They are in my opinion as universal as art can be. We naturally prefer skill to ineptitude, composition to chaos, charm to drabness, vitality to deadness. But we must remember that an aesthetically inferior work of art may be of great value for the historian of culture (e.g., No. 16) while a handsome piece of an already known type may not add anything to our knowledge of art.

The seals of the Uruk period are often characterized by a remarkable degree of movement. A lively specimen is No. 1 (the lower part of which is unfortunately broken away). A calf leaps in mid-air as if over the back of the humped bull in the foreground.<sup>20a</sup> The artists regularly take the necessary liberty with perspective so as to show both horns symmetrically. The calf's wavy, curved horns are gracefulness itself. A stylized tree provides the natural atmosphere. This seal dates from around 3000 B.C.

The Uruk period imperceptibly evolved into, and was not violently supplanted by, the Jemdet Nasr Age. No. 2 is a seal



*By courtesy of the British Museum*

This photograph of an Aramaic bowl was made with a special lens so that the incantation on the concave surface appears without distortion.





Seals 1 & 2

that may well mark the transition from Uruk to Jemdet Nasr (about 2800 B.C.). A nude hero grasps the tail of a lion to pull him off his prey, a bull. At the same time the hero shows an apparently protective interest in a goat. Under the latter is a jar symbolizing fertility and plenty. A rather ineffectively conventionalized plant indicates the environment. This seal reflects an attitude of the early inhabitants of Babylonia, who were possibly the Sumerians: They had got beyond the hunting stage and had become herdsmen of large and small cattle. Thus the gem cutter often shows men rescuing cattle from beasts of prey, notably from the lion. The use of the drill is quite noticeable on this seal; note the circular drillings to indicate the hero's eye, the goat's hooves, and the jar. The drill is employed widely throughout the Jemdet Nasr age.

No. 3 is a Jemdet Nasr seal showing a bear attacking a bull. An eagle with spread wings soars overhead. A tree is in the background. In this period beasts tend to be sculptured as if their torsos consisted of three detachable parts. This seal is unusual in that the bear is rare in Mesopotamian art.

No. 4 is one of the handsomest examples of fine art from the Jemdet Nasr Age. A tree growing on a conventionalized mountain provides the setting. While one deer reclines in the background, another in the foreground kneels to lap water from a stream. Inasmuch as deer are not otherwise shown lapping water, the artist may well have known from personal observation that the deer kneels on its forelegs to drink. Thus convention does not stifle the truly gifted artist.

The Jemdet Nasr seal cutters also fashioned cylinders with geometric and floral designs. On No. 5 are two different flowers; dotted circles are arranged symmetrically in the field. Above and below are borders with slant hatchings, between the end of the seal and a horizontal line.

No. 6 comes from the period of the early tombs at Ur; an age now called the Third Early Dynastic that fell around the middle of the third millennium B.C. While to the inexperienced eye this seal may at first appear enigmatic, the subject is quite clear. Two people seated on chairs are enjoying a drink together. They draw the beverage from the jar through copper tubes: the Sumerian equivalent of 'straws'. The social inferiority of the two attendants is mirrored in their small size. The crude



representation of the face is a natural outgrowth of the technique in No. 2. Sumerian men are regularly shown clean-shaven of head as well as face, clad in a skirt, and nude from the waist up. The crescent moon in the upper centre is so frequent a device that we need not point it out every time it will occur on the other seals. The jar incidentally is set on a stand.

Nos. 7-19 from the dynasty of Sargon of Accad, the first Semite to conquer the ancient world, date from about the twenty-third to the twenty-first centuries. No. 7 depicts the same subject as No. 6 but the style is quite different. The Accadian artist is far closer to reality than his Early Dynastic forerunner. Real men, rather than fantastic outlines, drink from the common jar. In accordance with Semitic notions of personal decorum, the drinkers and their attendant are clad in long robes that cover almost the whole body. The right shoulder is left uncovered and free. The men have hair on their heads and generous beards in good Semitic fashion. The chairs are of the camp-stool variety. Incidentally, since chairs and other pieces of furniture were usually made of wood, and clothes of wool, the objects themselves have been long disintegrated by time and moisture. What we know of artifacts made of organic matter comes mainly from artistic representations of, and literary references to them.

While No. 8 is not a great piece of art, it is nevertheless of interest as a clear representation of a typical theme. Antithetic, rampant lions attack a pair of crossed bulls. On each side, a hero wearing a flat cap plunges a dagger into the lion's neck with one hand and grasps the lion's tail with the other. The symmetrical composition is roughly in the shape of 'I X I I'. The bulls' heads are shown in profile except for the horns, which are in front view. The lions' heads are seen as if from above. A divine symbol terminates the scene.

No. 9 shows two similar heroes, one straddling a bull, the other a lion. The beasts seem to groan with open mouths, so painful are the tail-and-leg holds. As usual the Accadian artist produces a symmetrical scene. Note the crouching deer at the lower centre. To the side is the panel with the owner's name. Our hero is often taken to be Gilgamesh, whose exploits are recounted in the greatest epic of pre-Homeric antiquity: the Gilgamesh Epic, about which we shall presently have more to

say. But whether or not the hero is Gilgamesh, he is a well-defined personality in the artistic monuments. He is regularly shown face-front, but body in profile. He is nude except for a wrestling belt, on which holds were to be attached in conformity with the rules of an ancient school of wrestling.<sup>21</sup> He is well bearded and his hair comes down in curls on either side. Jemdet Nasr (and perhaps Uruk) age artists depicted him at first with one curl on each side. Subsequently, in the third millennium we find our hero with two curls on either side. By the Accadian period, however, and for all future times, he is regularly represented with three on a side. Usually a character antithetically duplicated does not imply the existence of twin heroes; the device is purely for symmetry. However, here the artist has differentiated the heroes; the one on the right has the normal three curls, and the one on the left, the atypical two. I do not know whether the differentiation is accidental or whether it will prove of significance mythologically.

No. 10 shows an antithetic repetition of the same hero vanquishing a bull that he has turned upside down and into whose neck he sinks a heel. Note the dagger fixed in the hero's belt. The miniature scene in the centre delineates a minor deity (perhaps the apotheosized king) hailing the seated major god who welcomes him. The respective gestures these gods make with their hands are presumably those of the ancient Mesopotamians under similar circumstances. The horned crown indicates divinity; the numerous horns of the seated god show his exalted rank among the gods. His flounced robe is more splendid than the simpler dress of the lesser god. The seated god holds a flowing vase which may mean that he is Ea; see Nos. 13, 15. A horned quadruped looking backwards stands under the inscribed panel. The bifurcation of his tail may be a device to give the illusion of motion; see the better example in No. 18.

Nos. 11 and 12 show the same hero vanquishing a bull and another hero, Enkidu by name, conquering a lion. There is no doubt about the identification of Enkidu, for he is described in the Gilgamesh Epic as he is represented on the seals. He is tauromorphous (i.e., like a bull) from the waist down and human from the waist up (except for bull's horns and ears). According to the Epic, Gilgamesh was the tyrant of the city of



Uruk (Biblical Erech). His oppression caused his subjects to cry to the gods for help. In response the gods fashioned Enkidu out of clay. After a period of 'training' in the wilds, where Enkidu protected weak animals from hunters and beasts of prey, he engaged in mighty combat with Gilgamesh. The battle ended in a tie, with both giants greatly impressed with each other's strength. They formed a bond of friendship and began a joint career of beneficent valour, in which they slew wicked beasts and monsters the world over. Note the Accadian artists' device of showing the far elbow bent upwards so that both arms may be seen. In No. 11, the faintly visible panel is so placed as to add to the symmetry, whereas in No. 12 its poor location detracts from the symmetry. The metal ends of No. 12 are still preserved.

Accadian seals are rich in mythological scenes. No. 13 shows the 'Zu-bird' brought for judgment before Ea, god of justice. Ea holds the vase from which flow the two sources of water. Possibly the duality of the streams was suggested by the two rivers of Mesopotamia: the Tigris and Euphrates. In any case even the far-off Canaanites later conceived of the sources of water as 'The Two Deepes'.<sup>22</sup> The deity in front of Ea is possibly a sort of divine prosecuting attorney (compare the role of Satan, as in the Book of Job). The defendant—bird below the waist, man above it—is brought in by a 'divine policeman'. The latter carries a club (of the mace type) and leads in the defendant by the scruff of his neck. The defendant is the Zu-bird about whom a myth has come down to us. He had stolen the 'Tablets of Destiny' from heaven. The tablets, somewhat like the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, could impart divine knowledge and power. The Zu-bird, who fled to the mountains, was so formidable a creature that most of the gods were afraid to go after him. He was apparently captured by a ruse. His wife was invited to a 'heavenly' party with the result that jealousy brought the Zu-bird within reach of the divine police. The text is fragmentary and so the actual capture has not been preserved in writing. However, the art vividly shows the Zu-bird brought to justice. Thus do art and literature fill each other's gaps.

No. 14 is one of the most surprising revelations of modern archaeology. Two horned deities destroy a seven-headed monster, while a couple of men look on. The god in front of the

monster has killed four of the heads but three heads are still alive and fighting. The body of the monster has gone up in flames and so his doom is sealed. There can be no doubt that this is a forerunner of the Grecian myth of Heracles and the seven-headed Hydra. Even in the Grecian version Heracles is assisted and the monster is destroyed by fire. This seal dates from about the twenty-second century B.C. long before the ancestors of the Greeks had reached Greece or emerged from barbarism. Nothing could be more striking than this illustration of the oriental origins of Greek culture. Recent discovery has shed more light on this myth. From the Ugarit myths we know that the evil Leviathan was a seven-headed monster. The early Canaanites attributed his conquest to the good god Baal; the Hebrews ascribed it to Yahweh.<sup>23</sup>

No. 15 is a masterpiece of exquisite detail. Ea is seated in his ocean shrine. Fish may be seen above the streams issuing from his vase. Water completely surrounds his abode. He exchanges greetings with an astral deity who ascends the lofty mountain heights that are conventionalized as triangles. He also holds a mace (?). His celestial nature is implied by the rays that issue from one of his shoulders. Behind him rises the Sun god with sunshine streaming from both shoulders, and holding his symbol, the saw-toothed dagger. Behind the Sun god is the wing of dusk; before him, the wing of dawn over which he is about to rise. The wings are personified:<sup>24</sup> the one as a lion whose head may be seen on careful observation, the other as a typical god with a crown of many horns. Behind the shrine kneels 'Gilgamesh' holding a divine emblem. Here, as now and then in the seals, his face is atypically in profile with the side curls shown as if they were behind.

No. 16 speaks as eloquently as any text could on the religious concepts and usages of the times. A personage who may possibly be a priest hails the seated god as he introduces the devotee, whose hands are clasped in reverence. The god, whose divinity is as usual indicated by horns, is not purely anthropomorphic, for his nether parts are in the form of a snake. Snake worship is quite prominent throughout ancient Western Asia. The flames on the altar show that a sacrifice is being offered. The ear of grain tells us that the goal of the sacrifice is fertility.

No. 17 is another presentation and offering scene. The bare-



headed, bearded worshipper brings a kid to his god. One minor deity leads the worshipper in by the hand, while another deity greets the seated god who holds a mace, and bespeaks good offices. The doctrine of intercession is common all through the ancient Near East and we shall hear more of it in the next chapter. The divine symbol known from No. 8 divides the scene. Overhead are the familiar heavenly devices of star and crescent moon. Before the god is what may be a many-legged altar.

Nos. 18 and 19 are models of charm. Beautiful friezes are made by continuous rollings of these seals. They are conventional but yet fresh. No. 18 shows crossed lions attacking rampant deer that look away behind them. The bifurcation of their tails gives an effective illusion of motion here. A date palm borders the scene. No. 19 depicts an eagle, with spread wings and great stylized tail, digging talons into antithetic deer that have risen to their hind legs but have not yet succeeded in getting up on their front legs. A tree terminates the scene.

With No. 20 we enter the age of the Third Dynasty of Ur, the last great period of Sumerian domination, in the twenty-first and twentieth centuries B.C. The presentation scene is the favourite one of the times: a minor deity introduces the devotee to a seated god. The throne is set on a platform. The devotee is again clean-shaven in conservative Sumerian style. An eagle flies overhead. The inscription gives the name and title of the cup-bearer who owned it.

No. 21 is in two registers. The upper scene is a simplified stylization of that in No. 20 while the lower is a frieze of swans swimming on billowy water. The combination of scenes on a single seal by the same artist establishes their contemporaneity; a fact that may be of importance to the art historian when the scenes are found individually on other seals.

No 22 also depicts a minor deity introducing a worshipper to a god. The god is perched on his symbolic beast, the bull. He is perhaps to be identified as Adad, the storm god. His smallness is due to a trend against the portrayal of divinity. Indeed on some seals the god himself is not depicted but is represented by his symbolic animal, supplemented by this god's emblem of forked lightning. The tendency to eliminate representations of the god is well known to the adherents of the great monotheistic religions. But even among ancient polytheists the tendency is

quite noticeable in different epochs.<sup>25</sup> Thus the gods are frequently represented by their symbols alone on Neo-Babylonian seals.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore possible that the golden calves of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, far from being worshipped for themselves, were conceived of simply as pedestals for the unseen Yahweh. However, the Judean authors of the Bible did not choose to see the religion of their Israelite rivals in so harmless a light. The ostrich that stands before the bull is not uncommon on the seals of many periods. The ostrich is still to be found in Western Asia and I have seen one in the Syrian Desert.

No. 23 shows the devotee before the god, who sits on a covered throne. The goddess frequently appears on these seals with hands raised to bespeak a kindly reception. She is known from the mural paintings recently discovered at Mari and dating from the days of the great Hammurapi (about 1704-1662 B.C.). The murals show that her flounced dress is covered with scallops of many colours. This may be the type of formal robe that Jacob gave his son Joseph: the 'coat of many colours'. Behind the god stands an attendant, before whom is a squat monkey. Before the god is a mannikin (whose size indicates small importance rather than small physical stature). Behind the devotee is his name in cuneiform: IGI-TA-NI. Bordering the scene is the lion-headed weapon known from the Bronze Gate of Balawat to consist of an offensive part for cutting the foe plus a defensive shield for protecting the user.

The Old Assyrian period falls mostly after the close of the Third Dynasty of Ur, and is mainly contemporary with the early part of the First Dynasty of Babylon (in the first half of the second millennium B.C.). No. 24 is a characteristic Old Assyrian seal. While the treatment is quite different, the theme is a presentation scene of Third Dynasty type. A minor deity introduces the worshipper to the seated god. The gods have flounced robes; the worshipper wears a simple one. Both the worshipper and the god, who sits on a covered throne, have caps indicated by slant hatching. The subsidiary scene in two registers shows a bull above with a symbol over its back, and two marching mannikins below. There is a sun disc over a crescent moon between the gods. Old Assyrian seals and texts are generally called 'Cappadocian' because most of them happen to have been found in the excavations in Asia Minor, where there were extensive colonies



of Assyrian merchants.<sup>27</sup> However, the Old Assyrian seals in the Iraq Museum come from Iraq itself and so are added proof that 'Old Assyrian' is more accurate a description than 'Cappadocian' for certain groups of these seals. Old Assyrian texts have also turned up in Assyria; e.g., in an early level under the Hurrian town of Nuzu.

No. 25 is a classical presentation scene of the First Dynasty of Babylon, of which Hammurapi is the outstanding king. All of the characters stand; even the major god. As often in this age, the worshipper offers a kid. The god is probably the Sun god, as the saw-toothed dagger suggests. He extends one foot through the slit of his long skirt and rests it on a pedestal. The goddess with raised hands blesses the occasion.

No. 26 shows a worshipper, in a short Amorite dress, in the presence of the same Sun god. The ancillary scene in two registers has three smaller figures standing below and three upside-down above. Below on the left is the nude woman (who represents fecundity), facing front and holding her breasts. To the right of her are a couple of dancing men. In the upper register to the left (i.e., when the seal has been inverted) is the 'bandy-legged' man. Though his head is in profile, the rest of his body faces front. His view and posture are dictated by his nature: since he symbolizes the male part of fecundity, it is appropriate that his genitalia be visible. He raises a hand welcoming a nude man and a clad man who hail him.

No. 27 is another First Dynasty presentation scene. A lesser deity in a long robe introduces the devotee who wears a hunting skirt. The main god carries a hunter's throw-stick. The god's symbol, the crook of Amurru (the national god of the Amorites whose dynasty was ruling the land), is set on the ground before him, while the same symbol is placed on the face of the dog behind him. The additional symbols of a fish and a star are in the field.

After the fall of the First Dynasty, around 1507 B.C., the land was ruled by the Cassites until the twelfth century. In spite of their general decadence, the Cassites ruled longer than any of the vigorous dynasties before or since. No. 28 is a Cassite seal in two registers and may date from around the middle of the second millennium B.C. In the upper scene the bird—apparently eating a plant held by the seated personage—placed above a

rising bull may recall the winged shrines on some far earlier seals. The panel encloses the name and title of the scribe who owned the seal. It is the lower register that is of primary interest. Three men are using an agricultural machine that ploughs and sows simultaneously. One man goads the yoke of oxen while another (with a conical hat) holds the ploughshares down in the ground; the man in the middle is pouring seed into the funnel of the seeder. This sophisticated agricultural machine is far more advanced than the implements used by most Near East peasants today.

The Middle Assyrian period covers the last four centuries of the second millennium B.C. No. 29 is an unusual example of Middle Assyrian glyptics and may be dated roughly to the thirteenth century B.C. Two graceful, rampant deer are held by a personified feature of landscape (perhaps a mountain). Out of the latter grow a couple of stylized trees. The scene is flanked by a palm tree on which are perched a pair of birds and on either side of which is a rosette. While the top part of the seal is unfortunately broken off, the bottom is bordered by a line of drilled dots that are interrupted only by the mountain (?) and the palm.

The remaining three seals are Late Assyrian, and date from about the eighth century B.C. No. 30 depicts a pair of winged sphinxes sitting antithetically about a conventionalized tree. The sphinx to the right is a bearded male; the one to the left is unbearded and probably female. Each raises a paw toward the tree. Overhead is the winged tailed sun disc of Assur, the national god. A rosette bounds the scene. The sphinxes reflect the Egyptian influence that was so strong in Late Assyrian times. It will be recalled that contacts with Egypt were strong throughout this period and that Egypt was even included in the Assyrian Empire during part of the seventh century B.C. This seal frankly lacks life. The next two seals, on the other hand, are full of motion.

No. 31 shows a winged, bird-headed griffon menacing a deer that looks behind in its flight. The theme is not original with the artist but he handles it with consummate skill. The high degree of stylization does not interfere with the illusion of speed. The sloping axis is an integral factor in attaining this effect.

No. 32 shows an Assyrian hunter pursuing a deer and discharging his arrows at it. The deer, already transfixed by a



couple of shafts, looks back in its rapid flight. The fish in the field symbolize the concept of plenty. The artist does not mean to convey the impression that the hunter is directly behind the deer. There is not enough room on these cylinders to show the space between the hunter and the deer. The ancient artists counted on the imagination of the spectator to supply so simple a detail.

Perhaps the best way for me to convey an idea of the vastness and importance of the ancient art of Western Asia is to remind you that the foregoing cylinders constitute less than one per cent of the seals in a single museum; that glyptics is only one of many branches of the art; that most of the unearthed material is still unpublished; and that all of the unearthed material is probably less than 1 per cent of what is still under ground.

## The Gods and Heroes of Ugarit



ONE OF THE MOST fascinating periods in history is the Amarna Age, which flourished in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. It was an age of great internationalism, when the Pharaohs of Egypt were in active correspondence with the kings of Western Asia and of the islands of the East Mediterranean. The period is attested by the most important and interesting group of inscriptions that has come down to us from antiquity: the Tell el Amarna letters, containing the personal correspondence of those kings. It is interesting that as recently as the winter of 1933-34 the Egypt Exploration Society discovered eight new cuneiform documents at Tell el Amarna. I had the good fortune to be called to Cairo to interpret and prepare for publication these new tablets.<sup>28</sup> Six of the eight new tablets are school texts and exercises from the local academy where Egyptians were taught to read and write the international language, Babylonian.<sup>29</sup> However, the two most interesting texts are letters. One is the record-office copy of the Pharaoh's letter introducing his new royal commissioner of Ascalon, Palestine, to the governor of that city. The other letter was sent to the Pharaoh by a Syrian chieftain, who writes of invasions, burnings, and slaughter in his district. He claims, with more apparent than real sincerity, to be loyal to the Pharaoh; but he was probably looking out for his own interests and may even have been using the same tactics to ingratiate himself with the Hittite king, Pharaoh's rival. Egypt was in the course of losing its Asiatic empire in the Amarna Age.

The Amarna Age is known to us not only from the Tell el Amarna letters but also by several interesting groups of documents found in Mesopotamia, in Asia Minor, and in North Syria. A remarkable group has been in process of being unearthed since 1929 at the ruins of Ugarit on the North Syrian coast. Ugarit has long been known to us by name from other



records. But it came to light as an actual city through one of the merest coincidences. Toward the end of 1928 an Arab peasant discovered a tomb there, quite by accident. The discovery soon reached the ears of archaeologists, and within a few months a French expedition was organized to excavate Ugarit. In 1929, after a few weeks of digging, the expedition came across a temple, with archives; and lo and behold, they were written in a hitherto unknown script: cuneiform, but apparently alphabetic and unlike Mesopotamian cuneiform. This writing proved to be a completely new type of script and to embody a new category of literature. The tablets were turned over to a distinguished French cuneiformist, Charles Vroilleaud, who in 1929 published 48 of the texts and later identified some of the letters. The fewness of the signs showed that the script was alphabetic, for no other system of writing, such as the syllabic or the logographic systems, would have so few characters: only 30 altogether.<sup>30</sup>

This new writing might conceivably have been used to record an entirely new language; but the original investigators worked on the assumption that the language would be akin to Phoenician and Hebrew. This assumption turned out to be correct. Hans Bauer, a German scholar, identified many of the letters. His work was checked and added to very soon afterwards by a Frenchman, Edouard Dhorme, who had a long record of decipherment work behind him. Vroilleaud practically completed the alphabet. During the first world war Dhorme was engaged in breaking down the codes and ciphers of the Central Powers, which shows how a specialist in ancient oriental languages can be of great use to his country in war time.

The Ugaritic documents were studied also by many other scholars in many different lands, and now we can interpret most of the unbroken passages: a remarkable achievement particularly because the texts represent a new literature in a new language.

The texts themselves are of varied content. Some are letters, others are business documents, others are rituals, others are government and temple records of various kinds. But the great bulk of them are poetic texts recording, so to speak, the lives of the North Canaanite gods, known to us from the Old Testament as the pagan gods that Yahweh's people were not to

worship. We have, then, the reverse side of the Hebrew religion: the biography of the gods of the forbidden religion that preceded, and also existed side by side with, the religion of the Israelites.

The literary texts deal mostly with the gods, and to some extent with human heroes. The gods of Ugarit are anthropopathic; that is, they are subject to human emotions and if you have a lofty concept of divinity, you will not find these gods behaving as gods should. They eat, they drink, they love, and they fight like human beings; and often like human beings at their worst. In form, the gods are usually anthropomorphic, having the shape of men. Sometimes they are even theriomorphic, having the shape of animals. But in spite of their crudeness, we can detect in them rudiments of virtues, human and divine, which form the background—the prehistory as it were—of the human and divine virtues that we now respect. For instance, of the hero Daniel, the favourite of Baal, it is written that he spends his time judging the cause of the widow and orphan—in perfect Old Testament wording. Again, it is said that Baal (in one of his more moral moments) abhors the sacrifices of wickedness. Here too the thought and form are duplicated in the Old Testament and we are reminded especially of passages in Amos.

As for the gods themselves: The father of men and gods is El, who is G/god with either small or capital 'g'. The Hebrew word *el* similarly denotes either 'God' or 'god'. El dwells in a land whence the two 'deeps' surge. One of El's epithets is 'creator of creatures'. His character is mild. He is always pleasant; never in a rage. He never interferes with the normal activities of nature; but the other gods always come to him when decisions must be made, for he is the supreme authority.

His wife is Asherah, one of the goddesses whom we find abused in the Old Testament. Her epithet is 'creatress of the gods'. She bore to El a brood of seventy gods (the number 'seventy' is conventional for designating a sizable family; cf. Genesis 46:27, Judges 8:30). The most popular god is Baal,<sup>31</sup> who dwells in the mountain of the north, in Sapan. He is the nature god, whose epithet 'the rider of clouds' is applied to Yahweh in Psalm 68:5.



The most colourful goddess is Anat, goddess of love and war. She is the most bloody of all the warriors in the pantheon. Her devotion to her lover Baal transcends even death, as we shall see.<sup>32</sup>

There are many others: Kothar-and-Hasis is the Vulcan of the Ugaritic gods, the craftsman and artificer who fashions everything from beautiful jewellery to palaces fit for the gods.

There is a whole brood of lesser gods, among them some who are mere lackeys of the great gods, and are fit for nothing but menial services, such as to prepare donkeys for the gods to ride upon or to bear messages from deity to deity.<sup>33</sup>

Many of the doings of the gods are on the shocking side, in keeping with the epic mood. One may also find the hyperbole and the strangeness of the poetic idiom a little jarring to one's sense of the aesthetic and literary. Furthermore, one must not expect to find the rules of this world at work: the gods of Ugarit live in a different world and are subject to different rules of nature. But if you are willing to forget the twentieth century A.D. and let me lead you back to the reign of the good King Niqmad of Ugarit, we shall peep into the lives of the Ugaritic gods and heroes.<sup>34</sup>

The first glimpse that we have of the theogony is in a tablet (text 52) that tells of the creation of the 'beautiful and gracious gods'. We see El with his two wives, kissing their lips sweet as grapes. First they conceived and produced Dawn and his brother, Dusk. Then they bore the 'beautiful and gracious gods', who were only babies to the gods of Ugarit, but compared with us mortals they are giants indeed; for, though mere sucklings, they stretch one lip to the heaven and the other to the earth, so that they devour both the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea; and on this nourishment they attain mature godhood. These 'beautiful and gracious gods' symbolize, and by sympathetic principles inaugurate, a seven-year cycle of plenty, abounding in bread and wine.<sup>35</sup> Of the birth of the seventy<sup>36</sup> sons of Asherah we do not yet know. Perhaps further excavations will reveal more tablets to fill this gap. From the creation of the second generation of the gods, we turn to one of the main cycles of the Ugaritic pantheon: the Baal and Anat Cycle. If the story sounds choppy, it is because we are not always sure of the

order in which the tablets should be arranged. Moreover, some of the tablets are missing, while many of those we have are fragmentary.

Text 129 reflects a time when the sea-god Yamm was entitled to a palace befitting the sovereignty he then enjoyed. In text 137, Yamm sends messengers to the divine assembly with an arrogant demand that Baal be surrendered to Yamm presumably because Baal had not paid Yamm tribute. The divine assembly, with bowed heads, subserviently received the messengers, whereupon Baal rebukes the assembly and gets the gods to raise their heads. The emissaries, acting on Yamm's orders, come and deliver the message without even showing El, the head of the pantheon, the customary respect. El agrees to hand over Baal as a tributary and slave to Yamm. But Baal, infuriated, grabs a knife to slash down the emissaries, only to be held back by a couple of goddesses who seize his hands and tell him that he simply must not smite Yamm's messengers.

Possibly text 133 comes next, since it tells of Baal's proceeding to Yamm, whom he vanquishes by using two magic clubs fashioned by Kothar-and-Hasis (the god of craftsmanship) for the battle (text 68). By slaying Yamm, Baal succeeds as king.

Another set of tablets (called 'Cnt' or 'Anat' for reference purposes) declares how Anat, after battling victoriously, is invited by Baal to his mountain, Sapan, where he promises to reveal the secret of nature to her. When Anat sees Baal's messengers, she at first fears that he has been attacked by a foe but on being informed of the message, she hastens to comply and Baal receives her lavishly and asks her to help him get a palace so as to live up to his newly won kingship. Anat accordingly extracts authorization for the palace from El, and Asherah's messengers are sent to the divine craftsman Kothar-and-Hasis, with Baal's request. Text 51 describes Kothar-and-Hasis in his workshop, fashioning furniture of matchless beauty. Subsequently, with El's permission, Kothar-and-Hasis constructs the house and the housewarming is at last celebrated. Although Baal at first resists Kothar-and-Hasis's suggestion that a window be installed, he is at last persuaded. Thereafter (and probably as a result<sup>97</sup>) Mot<sup>98</sup> menaces Baal, who refuses



to show him respect; and Baal, who is cautioned against destruction in the underworld, communicates with Mot who has laid rival claims to the kingship. Baal then goes down into the underworld, where Mot reigns, and there Baal, after having mated with a cow, meets his death, to the detriment of terrestrial nature and to the sorrow of El and Anat (texts 62 and 67). Anat in her grief locates, with the help of the sun goddess Shapsh, Baal's corpse and performs the rituals befitting the dead. Then (text 49) an inadequate successor is chosen to rule in Baal's stead. Anat locates Mot, and after he admits killing Baal, Anat slays, dissects, and plants Mot in the ground. Then Baal returns to life so that nature responds with abundance once more. Baal thereupon vanquishes Mot and after seven years<sup>39</sup> Mot protests his misfortunes to Baal, whom he blames. A battle between Baal and Mot ensues but it is broken up by Shapsh, who frightens Mot off.

A few other texts deal with the mating of Baal. Thus No. 76 relates how Anat visits Baal, who mates with a cow and retires to his mountain, where Anat at last brings the news that a bull calf is born to him.

Another tablet (No. 75) includes the narration of Baal's fall after seven (or climactically eight) years of plenty.

Baal and Anat are also credited with vanquishing Leviathan, the seven-headed monster of the sea. The epithets which describe Leviathan (as well as his name itself) are those of the Old Testament, word for word. That is to say, they are not merely the same in translation; they are exactly the same words, just as English 'man' and German 'Mann' not only mean the same thing but are the same word. And as Baal (or Anat) defeats Leviathan in the Ugaritic mythology, so too Yahweh defeats the seven-headed monster in the Hebrew mythology.

So much for the main episodes of the main gods. There are minor episodes of lesser personages. For example, Yarih the moon god is in love with the goddess Nikkal. They are destined to be wed because it is predicted that they are to produce a wonderful son. Like the beginning of the *Aeneid*, the poet begins with 'I sing of Nikkal'. We then learn that the Moon sends Hirihi, the king of summer, to ask Baal for the hand of Nikkal in marriage. He offers a generous bride price of one thousand



Seals 3 & 4





Seals 5 & 6



Seals 7 & 8





Seals 9 & 10

shekels of silver, even ten thousand shekels of gold. And he adds these words to the intermediary—for there must always be an intermediary in such delicate matters:

*I shall send gems of lapis-lazuli  
I shall make her fields into vineyards  
The field of her love into orchards.*

This is the way he promises to be a good husband. Then comes the wedding ceremony, with everything arranged in order. The family stands around the scales. The father sets the beam, while the mother tends the trays of the balances; the sisters take care of the weights, while the brothers count the lumps of precious metal. The bride price is weighed carefully, down to the last shekel. After these formalities are over, the couple is wedded with a song to the divine songstresses, the Kotharat, and with this song the tablet ends.

This marriage of the gods is interesting to students of human institutions, because the terminology and the procedure are those of earthly weddings in Canaan. Of course one must use judgment in handling material of this kind, and not assume, for instance, that the price of a mortal bride was a thousand shekels of silver, ten thousand shekels of gold! But there is no doubt that the marriages that took place in heaven were patterned after those on earth.<sup>40</sup>

Another tablet actually deals with a marriage of human beings. There was a king named Kret, who had paid the marriage price for the beautiful princess Hurray, daughter of King Pebel. Pebel had apparently changed his mind about his son-in-law, and withheld Hurray from him and refused to allow her to rejoin her husband, King Kret. Just as in ancient Troy, this meant war. For in those days wars were fought for beautiful women as well as for land and for economic advantage. Without his destined bride, Kret is faced with the prospect of the extinction of his clan. Kret, realizing this, retired to his chamber and wept on a heroic scale: his tears dropped earthward like shekels, and his bed was wet with his weeping. He finally sobbed himself to sleep. In a dream El descended to him and revealed to him the course of events and what he was to do to gain possession of Hurray who would bear him progeny. He



told him Pebel was going to make him a peace offering if he would give up the girl and retire to his own territory; and he disclosed that the necessary ritual was to offer Baal acceptable gifts and get Baal's support in winning back the fair Hurray. Then Kret awoke and did what the god had revealed. He washed and rouged himself, offered sacrifices and poured libations. He ascended to the top of a tower, raised his hands heavenward, sacrificed to El, and propitiated Baal with presents. He provided food for an expedition of six months, and set out with three million men, marching not only by twos and threes but even by thousands and myriads. They started off on the week's march to Udm, the land of King Pebel. After three days of marching, our hero came to a shrine of Asherah, here called 'Asherah of the Tyrians, even the goddess of the Sidonians'; and he made this vow:

*If I may take Hurray to my bouse,  
Yea cause the lass to enter my court,  
I will give twice ber (weight)<sup>41</sup> in silver  
Even thrice ber (weight)<sup>41</sup> in gold.*

Then he marches on, and at the end of the week (i.e., after four more days of marching), they reach Udm.

Just as Jonah was asleep at the crucial moment, Pebel—who seems to be something of a comic character—slept while three million men tramped up to his gates. But he woke up at:

*The sound of the neighing of bis steed  
The braying of bis donkey  
The lowing of bis ploughing ox  
And the barking of bis dog.*

He sent out messengers to induce Kret to accept terms, and this was the message conveyed:

*So says King Pebel:  
Take silver and gold  
A share of ber estate  
And a permanent slave*

*A team of three horses  
 A chariot from the yard of a handmaid's son  
 Take, O Kret, peace offerings in peace!  
 But begone, O King, from my house;  
 Be distant, O Kret, from my court!*

But Kret replies that he has all these things: he has plenty of gold and silver and slaves; he does not want what he has already got:

*But what is not in my house shalt thou give!  
 Give me Lady Hurray  
 The well-bred, thy first born.  
 Whose charm is the charm of Anat  
 Whose loveliness is the loveliness of Astarte  
 Whose brows are lapis-lazuli  
 And whose eyes are alabaster [?] bowls . . .  
 Let me find repose in the gaze of her eyes.  
 For in my dream El has given,  
 In my vision, the Father of Man,  
 An offspring unto Kret  
 Yea, a lad to the servant of El.*

Kret's regaining Hurray is inevitable because El has foreseen that they will produce sons and daughters. So Kret follows El's instructions and refuses Pebel's peace offering. The will of the gods is, of course, duly fulfilled.

Another part of the Kret Epic depicts Kret in his old age. He is sick and decrepit, and according to the sympathetic principles of ancient thinking, his country suffered from drought and famine. Moreover, the prospect of death (for Kret, like many other kings, was regarded as divine) raised the question as to how a god could die. Prince Yasib, a rebellious son of Kret, asked Kret to vacate the throne, because Kret was neglecting the government, so that he, Yasib, could rule instead. For Yasib's temerity, Kret cursed him with a hearty malediction. El himself saw to it that the demonic cause of Kret's illness was exorcized so that Kret was restored to health, and his country to well-being.



Another human hero who figures in these tablets is one who is mentioned in the book of Ezekiel. This is not the Daniel famous for his exploits in the lions' den. This Daniel (or 'Danel') is another virtuous man, who spends his time seeing that justice is given to the widow and the orphan. Daniel's wife is the lady Danataya, and their happiness would be complete except that they have no son. The poem relates how Daniel is giving the gods food and drink. In fact, he feeds them and gives them drink for a week, so that they will become his friends. At last Baal intercedes on Daniel's behalf with the superior god, El. El is as usual quite amenable, and blesses Daniel, instructing him as to the proper ritual. For if men know the proper ritual and are blessed by the gods, all things are possible. In fulfilment of El's prediction, Danataya bears Daniel a son, who is called Aqhat. Daniel is elated and laughs:

*He sets his feet on the footstool  
He raises his voice and shouts:  
I shall sit and rest  
And my soul shall repose in my breast.  
For a son is born unto me as unto my brethren  
Yea a root as unto my kin.*

Then he goes on and says what his son is going to do, and what his son is going to mean to him. Aqhat is going to perform all the domestic, religious, and personal services for which a man needs a son. One of the personal services is described in this way:

*(A son) who holds my hand when I am drunk  
Yea carries me when I am sated with wine.*

He is thus eventually to have a grown-up son to take him home at night when necessary.

After the birth of his boy, Daniel invites to his house the song-stresses, the Kotharat, the daughters of the New Moon. They eat and drink and sing for an entire week and then depart. Meanwhile, Aqhat grows up to be a fine young man and a powerful hunter. And one day Daniel, while dispensing judgment in the gate and protecting the widow and the orphan, lifts

up his eyes and sees Kothar-and-Hasis coming bearing a bow in his hands. Daniel thereupon closes court and invites the god to his tents. When they get there he instructs his wife Danataya to prepare food and drink for the god. Kothar-and-Hasis hands over the bow, which is ultimately to be given to Aqhat. Having partaken of Daniel's hospitality, the god departs from the tents of his host. A short time thereafter, while Aqhat is out hunting, the goddess Anat sees him and is envious of the bow which enables him to hunt so well. He tells her that if she wants a bow she should go to Kothar-and-Hasis who will perhaps make her one also. But Aqhat will not part with his own bow. She tries to persuade him by promising him what men have always wanted, immortality:

*Ask for life and I'll give it to thee,  
Immortality, and I'll endow thee therewith.  
I'll make thee count years with Baal  
Thou shalt count months with the son of El.*

But he does not trust her and replies that he knows he is mortal, and is going to die some day. He refuses to give her his bow. But it is always dangerous for mortals to disobey the gods. Anat laughs sarcastically and tells Aqhat his fate is sealed. These are her words:

*I shall meet thee on the path of sin—  
I shall bumble thee on the path of pride.*

For being so haughty with a goddess, his doom is nigh.

But Anat does not dare do anything unless she gets permission from the father of gods, El. She goes to him and makes her appeal, which apparently is granted.

In the next scene we find Anat resorting to a sort of violence that we might associate with Chicago gangsters of several years ago. She goes to an assassin, Yatpan, and plots the murder of the hapless Aqhat, the son so dear to his father Daniel. She tells Yatpan that she will fly with him in the midst of a flock of eagles and poise him above Aqhat's head just as the latter is sitting down to lunch in the open. Yatpan is then to strike Aqhat twice



on the head and thrice over the ear, so that he will be killed and her honour will be avenged.

The assassination took place at a city called Qart Abilim, where Aqhat was hunting. She gave the signal, and Yatpan assassinated him according to the plan:

*His soul went out like wind;  
Like a puff, his spirit;  
Like smoke out of his body.*

Thus did Aqhat perish.

Aqhat had a sister named Pughat. Upon hearing the tragic news, she was distraught and went into mourning. Daniel too was heart-broken. But there is little avail in grief alone; there are always things to be done. So Pughat harnesses his donkey, fits it with saddle and bridle, places Daniel on the donkey and sends him off to retrieve the body of his son. Now Daniel had heard that the eagles had devoured the corpse of his child, and when he finally spied the flock of eagles he raised his voice and shouted:

*May Baal break the wings of the eagles,  
May Baal break their pinions!  
Let them fall at my feet!  
I shall split them open and look,  
If there is fat  
If there is bone  
I shall weep for him and bury him;  
I shall put him in the niche of the ghosts of  
the earth.*

This imprecation is enough to get Baal to smash the wings of the eagles. Daniel opens them, but behold there is no fat and no bone within. So he invokes Baal again—this time to heal the eagles, for he had made a mistake. Baal mends the eagles and when their wings are made whole, Daniel cries: 'Eagles, flee and fly!' And the flock is off again. Then Daniel lifts his eyes and beholds Hargab, father of the eagles. By the same imprecation, he brings Hargab to earth and opens him and looks inside; but finds nothing, and so Hargab is healed and sent off. Finally

(the Semitic storyteller well knew the technique of suspense) Daniel beholds Semel, mother of the eagles. He brings her down by the help of Baal. She too falls at his feet. He opens her and finds fat and bone. He removes them and buries the body of his son. He raises his hands heavenward and cries: 'May Baal break the wings of the eagles if they fly over the grave of my son.' Then he goes to Qart Abilim, the town where the murder was perpetrated, and curses it with years of drought and famine:

*Seven years may Baal fail,  
Even eight, the rider of clouds!  
(Let there be) no dew,  
No rain  
No surging of the two deeps  
No goodness of Baal's voice!*

And he weeps for seven years and only after seven years does he dismiss the weeping women from his house, whereupon he makes sacrifices.

Meanwhile, Pughat has not been inactive. She vows that she is going to kill the slayer of her brother. Armed with a sword, and disguised as a man, she goes to Yatpan, the assassin among the gods, who after his tongue has been loosened with wine, brags of his crime. We may infer that she wreaks dire vengeance on him, even as Anat had done on Mot. But our tablet is broken off, and that is all we know of the legend of Aqhat.

Yet we must infer a happy ending, because the story is called not the epic of Daniel, but the epic of Aqhat. And in Ezekiel, Daniel is mentioned with two other righteous men, Noah and Job. God is represented as saying that even if these three men were here today they would escape only with their own lives but they would not save their children. We know that Noah saved his children, and Job came through with children. It would follow that Daniel saved his son too. So Aqhat was doubtless brought back to life in a part of the legend yet to be found.

While the Ugaritic tablets are of considerable importance for their connections with the poetry of the Bible, and to a lesser



extent with the Homeric epics and the literature of other ancient peoples, they deserve to be read for their own merit as literature. They constitute a new chapter in the history of literature and are the most important addition to ancient literature since the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphic and Mesopotamian cuneiform in the last century.<sup>43</sup>

## Private and Public Life in Nuzu



IN 1925 THE attention of the American Schools of Oriental Research was directed to the mound of Nuzu<sup>43</sup> in north-eastern Mesopotamia. Excavations there continued till 1931, and in the course of excavation, many thousands of tablets were uncovered, nearly all dating from the Amarna Age, the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. These tablets give us the most intimate picture that we have found to date, of any community in remote antiquity.

The tablets deal with four or five generations. To take a specific family, the earliest-mentioned generation is represented by Turshenni. Then, the first generation to be attested as active in the city of Nuzu is represented by his son, Puhishenni. During his day the local king of Arrap-ha (the ancient name of Kirkuk, which city is now famous for its oil fields) was Kipteshup; while the mayor of Nuzu was Ili-Erish. The second active generation is marked by the career of the greatest known 'hero' of the town, a man with the exotic Hurrian name of Tehiptilla. During his time, the local king was It-hiya; while the mayor, a scandalous character of whom we shall hear more later, was Kushiharbe. The third active Nuzu generation of that family is represented by Ennamati, and the fourth by Takku, who lived to see the final doom of Nuzu.

Nuzu was a small town, but the villas of several 'millionaires' happened to be located in this town. The archives of these millionaires were uncovered in the course of excavation and constitute the Nuzu tablets.

The texts are on clay tablets, written in a provincial dialect of Babylonian. Babylonian was not in fact the native language of these people. They were Hurrians of whom we have already had something to say. The texts were written to a great extent by Hurrian scribes who had learned Babylonian. Things being what they were, it is not surprising that the tablets include from



time to time loan words in the native language, which furnish one of the keys to the Hurrian tongue. In a Babylonian text of fifty or sixty words, for example, there might be one or two Hurrian words and the context often provides the clue to the meaning of the loan words in the imperfectly known Hurrian language. All but two of the personal names mentioned above are native Hurrian names. (Only Ili-Erish is Semitic; while Kushiharbe is Cassite.)

In some ways, the Babylonian people, and the neighbours who came under their influence, were more tidy about their daily lives than we. All their transactions, no matter how trivial, had to be recorded and witnessed and sealed; as these imperishable clay tablets attest. The documents included in these private archives are of all sorts—accounts of transactions of sale, loan, exchange; marriage, adoption, and divorce; legal documents and court transactions of all kinds. Their lives are often far better documented than those of most of us.

The archives that are most numerous and particularly famous among scholars are the archives of the aggressive Tehiptilla; those of Shilwateshub, son of the king; and the archives of a grasping and successful business woman named Tulpunnaya, about whom we shall have more to say.

The documents are, as I said, of several types. I am going to sketch some of the main types, because they expose to us the social patterns to be traced in the town of Nuzu.

Many of the documents relate to exchange. Exchange, again, is of several types. There is, first, absolute exchange, by which A exchanges land for an equivalent parcel of land belonging to B. This is a permanent exchange, and the properties are not to revert back to the original owners. In addition the Nuzians resorted to temporary exchange. For instance, if A has a donkey and needs barley or metal, and B has barley or metal and needs the services of a donkey, they may effect an exchange either for a stipulated period, or with the proviso that as soon as one man returns the barley or metal, he may take back the donkey.

Coins, of course, were not in use, and whenever they write of buying a thing with metal, the silver (or other metal) is specified in terms of weight; and at that usually an equivalent of value in nonmetal was intended: one-half mina of silver was

equal to an ox, an ass, and ten sheep. There are also less standard equivalents in other 'denominations'.

There are many documents relating to adoption. Adoption played a very significant role in the society of the ancient Near East. People for practical, social, and religious reasons, had to have heirs. If a couple remained childless for long, they would eventually adopt a free-born child, or even a slave. For the continuity of the estate was essential for the integrity of the social system; an heir had to be secured in one way or another. Furthermore, the religion required that the members of a family be on hand to take care of the burial and the mourning rites of the dead. For many reasons, then, adoption was indicated by the matrix of society. Those adoptions also took the place of insurance and annuities in our form of civilization. Thus, if a person was unmarried, or married but childless, with no son to look after him in his old age, take care of the house and the food supply, and manage the estate, he (she or they) could adopt a son who would be bound legally to show him filial respect, to take care of him in old age, to provide food, clothing, and shelter as long as he lived, to bury and mourn for him when the time came, and to keep the estate running. In exchange for this service, the adopted son becomes a member of an established household and thus his fortune is made. It really is a sort of social security or annuity provision. To take a specific example: A lady belonging to the class of palace maids (which means that she was in the service of the king) and apparently unmarried, made over her furniture and her slaves (including a marriageable woman) in return for the filial service of a young man who agreed not only to treat her with the respect due to a mother during all her life, but eventually to bury her and mourn properly for her. The adopted son in addition to getting the security and backing needed to be a 'solid citizen' also gets a wife for himself in the person of the marriageable slave. There was thus mutual benefit, and no possible exception can be taken to such a social procedure.

Another lady, named Mattiya, owned seven 'homers' of land, a tidy little stretch of property. But she had no son nor anyone else to look after her when she would become old. So she turned over her seven homers of land to Tehiptilla, who was perhaps the richest man of the community, and thereby adopted him.



He was the richer for the land, and she had the security of being taken care of for life by the most solid citizen of her community.

Of course there were slaves as well as free men, and there was an almost (but not quite) hard and fast line of demarcation between these two elements in the population. Slaves, for the most part, were foreign. The choicest of them came from the mountains in the north, called Lulluland, and the handsomest and strongest and best slaves are specified as Lullians.

One peculiar type of slave requires special mention. They were the Hapiru, characterized as being voluntary slaves. The Hapiru were known widely throughout the Near East during the entire second millennium B.C. They constituted an international class or guild. Sometimes, as in Ugarit, they served as government officials. In the Amarna letters, they appear as marauding bands, harrying the provinces of rulers who were unable to maintain public security; or they could enter voluntary slavery as they did in Nuzu. However ridiculous 'voluntary slavery' sounds to our ears, it is a fact in the ancient Near East and has an economic basis. Some people would prefer to be a slave for life in the house of a millionaire, with the guarantee of three meals a day and clothing and a roof over their heads, than to face the uncertainty of the future that poor but free men may have to face. And so we hear, in the archives of Tehipilla alone, of many Hapiru entering his household as voluntary slaves. These Hapiru 'contracts' appear in the other Nuzu archives as well.

Our attitude to such a matter is convincing disproof of the notion that our lives must be determined essentially by economic considerations. Economically, no doubt, many of us would be better off if we became the permanent slaves of some plutocrat, provided he treated us right. We might even get all sorts of opportunities that would be otherwise denied to us. Yet this is so distasteful that it is unacceptable and even unthinkable to most of us. However, if economic considerations were supreme, we should gladly seize on such an opportunity as the Hapiru actually did.

In Nuzu, men sold themselves into slavery in order to obtain, for instance, a wife. In other words, men who knew that they would never have enough money to pay the bride price for a wife of their own, held that it was better to be a married slave

than a free bachelor. This nearly parallels the story of Jacob, who worked so long (though not technically as a slave) to win his bride from her father.

Other slaves come into slavery with their wives. The rule is that if a slave brings his own wife, their children are free-born; but if the master of the house provides the wife, the children are the master's slaves.

The laws of the land decreed that the freedom of native-born citizens was inviolable; that it could neither be wrested away from them against their will nor bartered away willingly. One would imagine that this law of the inalienability of freedom would be respected by all the people whom it was designed to protect. But nothing of the sort! People got into debt, and while the law forbade them to sell themselves as slaves, there were ways of getting around the law. For one thing, they managed it by abusing the institution of temporary exchange. For example, a man would say: For so many loads of barley, or so many measures of wool, or so many weights of precious metal, I exchange my full-time personal services. Sometimes a time limit was set to this contract, but sometimes there was no time limit, in which case it effectively circumvented the prohibition of selling one's liberty. And they not only sold their own liberty, but fathers would barter the freedom of their children, to pay off debts, or to get food, or for monetary consideration. To call such procedures 'exchanges' is at best a euphemism.

A girl could not be handled in the same way, because her presence in the house of the master might be abused. But there was a way to get around this law also: She could be assigned as 'a daughter and a future daughter-in-law' (or some other form of seeming 'adoption') to a person who would often promise to provide her with a home and to commit himself to see that she would eventually be married to someone in, or out of, the household. On the surface there was nothing wrong with this, for every girl ought to be provided with a husband. But every girl had a monetary value (usually forty shekels of silver) as a marriage price, and so the father was really as a rule selling his daughter for about forty shekels with which to pay his debts. Sometimes he would specify that she should be married only to a free man, or that at any rate her children should be guaranteed their freedom. But often it was stated that the girl may be



married off to one of the slaves in the house, and sometimes it is even stipulated that her children would be slaves also. For instance, one father makes over his daughter as 'a future daughter-in-law' to Tehiptilla, and Tehiptilla specifies that she is to be married to one of his slaves; if that slave dies, to a second of his slaves; if he dies, to a third; and if he dies, to a fourth slave. In other words, even the death of three husbands will not free the girl from slavery in the household of Tehiptilla; and all the latter wanted, of course, was to have his male slaves well equipped with wives so that lots of little slaves would grow and be available for future labour, in his own old age and in the next generation of his household.

So much for one of the wise laws that human shortsightedness and greed found means to thwart. But before we move on to another topic, let us emphasize the point that not all slaves were of equal status any more than all free men are of equal status. Thus a slave named Hinzuraya was a prosperous business woman and her children were born free.

Land was inalienable; it belonged in theory to the king who granted it to warriors in exchange for their feudal service. The grant and the feudal service normally passed from generation to generation, and from reign to reign. Land was thus to stay within the family. (This system was introduced by the Indo-European invaders, of the second millennium B.C. It appears at Ugarit, in ancient Israel, and in Greece.<sup>44</sup>) But again, men found a way to get around the law. The socially valid institution of adoption proved convenient for circumventing the land law. Tehiptilla, for instance, had himself adopted as the son of several hundred people in the town, and accordingly obtained the right to inherit their property. He thus became the son of many fathers; and in exchange he gave each of his fathers a 'filial gift' (not, of course, a sale price, God forbid!) of so many shekels, or of donkeys, or of barley. So he kept within the law and soon snapped up vast tracts of land. The former owners stayed on the land as serfs, and continued to be responsible for the feudal service.

Sale adoptions can easily be differentiated from real adoptions. In real adoptions, it is specified that the adopted son is to respect the parents, and shelter and care for them for life, and bury and mourn for them when they are dead. These provisos are absent

from sale adoptions. In sale adoptions the 'filial gift' is clearly specified, whereas it is absent in real adoptions.

The status of women is particularly interesting in these documents. Many people labour under the misapprehension that in antiquity women were reduced to humiliating conditions, from which they have been emancipated only in modern times. But this is not in accordance with the facts. Thus, several rich and powerful women are mentioned in the Nuzu documents. One Amminae was actually the governor of a considerable province, which had been assigned to her by Saushattar, king of the Mitanni Empire. Then there was a female counterpart of Tehiptilla in the person of Tulpunnaya whom we have already mentioned. She was as successful as any man in her methods of acquiring wealth. She entered into many sale adoptions, making herself the adopted daughter of many men so as to obtain their lands. Her devices were just as ruthless as those of Tehiptilla, if not more so. For instance, she acquired a girl named Shitanka as a so-called daughter and prospective daughter-in-law; and these are the marriage prospects she offered Shitanka: the latter was to be married to a slave of Tulpunnaya; if that slave died, to a second; then to a third; and so on down to a clause that if the tenth slave husband died, she was to be married to an eleventh. There was no way out for Shitanka; and it was also stipulated (and this is something strange, even in the most brutally obvious pseudo-adoptions) that Tulpunnaya had the right to hire Shitanka out as a harlot, as an alternative to marrying her off. (To be sure, prostitution did not bear the stigma it has in our society. In passing, we may note that though a girl named Eluanza was well known as a prostitute, she was nevertheless to fetch forty shekels of silver, the standard bride price for the average girl. Apparently her profession did not lower her value in the marriage market.)

Another series of documents concerns the welfare of a woman named Kizaya, another victim of Tulpunnaya, who comes to court and tells the judge that Tulpunnaya has tried to force her to marry a man named Mannuya whom she did not like, whereas she wanted to marry Arteya, whom she loved. For some reason, Tulpunnaya lost the case, and Kizaya was given leave to marry the man she wanted. Later, Kizaya tried to leave Tulpunnaya's estate, but this time Tulpunnaya was able to have



her way in court, and Kizaya was forbidden to leave. Eventually, Kizaya had to turn over her son (presumably born as a free human-being to herself and Arteya) as a slave to Tulpunnaya.

Many men, as well as women, became the slaves of Tulpunnaya. One named Puhishenni 'exchanged' his personal services for a shipment of barley, without specifying any time limit to the service, and we are almost sure that he remained a slave for life. Another, Arili, oddly enough exchanged himself for food and clothing during *fifty years* of service in her house; and again he could hardly have hoped to survive such a long term. (Compare our ninety-nine year leases.) So we see how men, as well as women, fell into her clutches. Other men also gave their sons over to Tulpunnaya. Two men gave her their sons in exchange for barley, one for six years' service, one for twenty years.

Tulpunnaya got into legal entanglements of one kind or another, but in the court records she was almost invariably successful in defending her cases. In one case, a man named Killi opened the locks to irrigate his field at a time when the water was due to her. She won that case, for the commissioner of irrigation testified that the water was hers and not Killi's at that point.

Before leaving the status of women it would be interesting to note that one of the most highly educated men of the town, none other than a scribe, was the slave of a lady of Nuzu. On all counts we can see that the ladies of Nuzu were not without power.

One interesting social feature of the life of Nuzu was the element of fratriarchy in society, i.e., the jurisdiction of a brother over his brothers and sisters. Some explanation of this social institution is called for especially because it has been coming to light only in recent years. A pure fratriarchal system would work out according to this pattern: if a man had a number of sons and died, one son (usually the oldest) would be the head of the family; but when that son died, a son of the latter would not be next in line, but instead the second brother; and so down through the line of brothers till they had all died. Then, and only then would a grandson of the original man start a new succession of brothers. In a family that had a long fratriarchal line, one brother (not necessarily the eldest) would be the



Seals 11 & 12





Seals 13 & 14



Seals 15 & 16





Seals 17, 18 & 19

official fratriarch, and a second the vice-fratriarch. It is interesting (though Biblical scholars have not generally recognized it) to see this same terminology, reflecting a similar institution, in the Old Testament, particularly in Chronicles, where 'fratriarch' and 'first-born' are sharply differentiated, and where vice-fratriarchs are specified.

Side by side with the fratriarchate was the less common sororarchate: the jurisdiction of a sister over her brothers and sisters. I will give one striking illustration: Shitanka, the handmaid of Tulpunnaya, actually disposed of her brother and handed him over to Tulpunnaya as a slave.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to find an account of a sister disposing of her brother in this way. More often, of course, the reverse was the case, the brother disposing of the sister.

As we come to a discussion of the institution of marriage, I wish to recall at the outset that the word 'marriage' tends to be used nowadays uncritically, as if all marriages were alike regardless of the conditions of the marriage in question. But a moment's reflection should remind us that even today a Catholic marriage is not the same as a Protestant marriage; the one rules out divorce, while in the other, divorce can often be had without too much difficulty. Or, in the Near East, when a woman marries a Moslem, unless it is specified in the marriage contract that the husband is limited to this one wife, he is entitled to three more wives without divorcing any of them. Furthermore, he may divorce any of them without cause by saying 'I divorce you' three times in public. So marriage is not just marriage; it is many different things according to the type of marriage that is entered into. Easterners both in antiquity and in modern times are more definite and intelligent about the marriage contract than we are in the West. In the Near East, the bride and groom state definitely what they expect of each other, in their marriage contracts. They do not just sign a standard form on the dotted line. They say exactly what they are to give and take after marriage, and they are held to it.

In the community of Nuzu there were a good many varieties of marriages, judging by the contracts that have been found. I shall start with the most aristocratic marriage of which we have a record in the Nuzu documents. Shilwateshub, son of the king, married his sister Shuwarhepa to Zigi. It was specified in the



marriage contract that Zigi was never to take a second wife during her lifetime, nor to take a concubine. The sons of the bride are to be the heirs of Zigi, and any children that he may have by any (former?) wife are to be relegated to second place. Moreover, Zigi did not apparently pay for this bride with a bride price; she was not bartered to him as far as we can tell. This was a dignified and aristocratic marriage in which such matters had evidently no place. It is clear that the contract is to the advantage of the bride, who was of superior social status; and probably any children of the union would belong to the family of the mother and not of the father. When a man paid a marriage price for his bride, he thus bought the right to the children. But in this contract, Zigi pays no price which would entitle him to the children.

The standard marriage price for the average girl, as I have remarked earlier, was forty shekels of silver. Sometimes, interestingly enough, this was paid on the instalment plan. I might call attention at this juncture to the fact that in countries where a marriage price is paid, women feel sorry for the women of America and other lands who are given away for nothing. To them that is a great humiliation. The greater a woman's price in the marriage market, the greater her pride in herself and in her relations with her husband for the rest of her life.

While women are frequently given away in marriage without their consent (and we must not forget that we still retain the ceremony of giving the bride away), according to a few of the Nuzu documents the bride is consulted, and her consent is of sufficient importance to be specified. One girl, who apparently had no parent or guardian, actually married herself off. She received from Tehiptilla ten shekels of silver and in exchange became the wife of one of his slaves.

Marriage in Nuzu seems to have been on a permanent basis, as a rule; even as it still is in that part of the world, in spite of the ease with which a man may divorce a woman. A man who has worked hard and saved enough to invest in a wife is not likely to go into the divorce courts and lose his investment. Desertions are rare in the Nuzu documents and in each case it is the woman who deserts the man. (In such cases in the East, the woman 'goes home to father', not 'to mother'.) In one case,

Shurihil is deserted by his wife. He goes to court and gets a constable with whom he makes for her father's house. Shurihil demands the return of his wife, and her father, recognizing that he as a father has no legal claim to his married daughter, discreetly hands her over to Shurihil. Another case of desertion had more serious complications. Kushuhari had been abandoned by his wife, who had gone home to Kiripsheri, who was probably her father, but perhaps her brother. Kushuhari had a constable with him when he went to Kiripsheri's house. However, Kiripsheri violently struck the deserted husband three times, while the constable, instead of protecting him, stood by, and merely reported the incident to the court. The victim told the court that he had been struck before the very eyes of the constable, and that the constable had made no effort to protect him. We do not know whether or how Kushuhari got his wife back.

There is only one divorce case in all the many tablets that have been published. Divorce is carried out in the same calm matter-of-fact way as marriage and other transactions. The girl went back to her father, a slight monetary adjustment was made, and the matter was closed apparently without ill-will.

A husband in his will may decree that his sons are to serve their mother, while the mother is given the right to devise the estate after her death to the son who had served her best. But a restriction is sometimes placed on the future widow: nothing was to be given to a strange man. The husband did not mind the estate going to anyone in the family, or to a favourite son; but not to a strange man. One of the oddest things is a quaint custom found in some last wills and testaments, that if the wife after the death of her husband leaves her house and marries another man, the sons shall take their mother, strip her, and drive her naked out of the house. Variations of this custom are attested in a cuneiform tablet from Hana (on the Middle Euphrates), in the Book of Hosea, in Aramaic incantations of about the sixth century A.D. in Southern Mesopotamia (see the twelfth chapter); and, most strangely, in Tacitus, who reports it as a custom among the primitive Germans.

The law courts were all in all very lively places, and their records contain the greatest variety, for the situations were of course more varied than those of routine business and family



affairs. In the Nuzu law courts, a man would have to prove his point by witnesses. In no tablet is there only one witness; as in the Hebrew Scriptures, a minimum of two witnesses seems to be required. If a man wishes to contradict the evidence of the other party, he is asked to take the 'ordeal oath of the gods'. This was evidently a nerve-racking procedure and the litigant seldom chose to go through with it. Instead, the Nuzians preferred to concede the case to the other party. (The ordeal oath of the gods is mentioned in the Book of Exodus though the plain meaning of the Hebrew has been altered in English and other translations, on account of theological scruple.)

Another way to settle a deadlock was to send litigants to the river for a water ordeal. This again was a thing from which they usually shrank back, and they would rather abandon the case than submit to it.

Ordeals, by the by, often have a sounder basis than we imagine. Among some Bedouin Arabs it is held that if you are telling the truth in court, your tongue will not be seared by momentary contact with a red-hot spoon; but if you are guilty and lying, it will be. In practice, this is physiologically correct, for if you are not nervous, the flow of saliva will be normal and your tongue can bear the brief touch of a hot spoon; but if your tongue is dry from fear, it will be scorched.

The Nuzu courts were filled with all sorts of cases—business misunderstandings, negligence, theft, and assault and battery. But really major crimes are conspicuous by their absence. The one exception is the protracted case of the citizens of Nuzu against 'His Excellency the Lord Mayor' Kushiharbe. Kushiharbe was the most prominent of all the mayors of Nuzu, and many of the tablets date from his time in office. He flourished during the days of the second, and probably greatest, generation in Nuzu; the one in which Tehiptilla lived, in the fifteenth century B.C. 'Kushiharbe' is a Cassite name, and the animosity that the citizens felt toward him may have stemmed to some extent from the fact that he was an outsider. The dossier of this case is not complete, but there are enough tablets filled with the complaints of the citizens against their mayor to show that the case was obviously a long and serious affair. The various sessions were heard before different judges, with different witnesses, on different occasions; and the amount of evidence is so telling

that though the conclusion of the case has unfortunately not yet come to light, we may rest assured that the mayor was indicted, impeached, and severely punished.

I need list only a few of the specific charges against him: He was accused of stealing wood from a government project in order to do some building on his own estate. He denied the charge vehemently, but his own carpenter admitted doing the job with wood known to be government property. So the mayor had not a leg to stand on. Then another man accused him of having illicit relations with a girl, Humerelli. Again he denied the charge, but another witness came and testified to another *tête-à-tête* with Humerelli and this did not help Kushiharbe's case. One group of victims testified that they had given bribes to a henchman of his called Peshkillishu, who was a thug. These victims had given the bribes in order to get (to pervert?) justice, and their accusation was that though he had accepted the bribe, he had not 'done justice' as he had promised. Others testified that Peshkillishu had broken their doors and rifled their houses; others, that he had impressed seals illegally in order to convert their property to Kushiharbe. A long list of people accused the mayor and his strong-armed henchmen of robbery aggravated by beatings or illegal imprisonment, or threats of such abuse. One man reports his brother had been taken away and held till ransomed. Another relates that his wife had been kidnapped and held for ransom. Still another had been robbed of his sheep while his daughter-in-law was taken away and held for eleven months. Robbing men of their cattle was a common occurrence, and many testified to this charge against Kushiharbe and Peshkillishu. The latter was also accused of entering and stripping several houses. The witnesses would come along one after another; as many as a dozen of them in a tablet; each pressing a serious charge against the mayor and his 'thugs'. One man pitifully complained that one of the latter, Ziliptilla, had seized a ram of his, slaughtered it, and sat down to a meal of mutton. There was one especially circumstantial complaint: Peshkillishu had kidnapped a man and held him for ransom. After two months, the victim's family thought they would try to rescue him, so one brother got a guide from the capital, Arrap-ha, and paid him to take him to the place where his brother was being held. On the way back the rescuing brother



was murdered and the guide kidnapped; and then the guide's father collected damages from the original victim's family in whose service his son had been kidnapped.

Another mayor was implicated in the course of the trial and there is a good possibility that the mayors had an organized inter-city crime racket. But it is interesting to find that these ancient communities were not subject to absolute dictatorship and could free themselves from tyranny by due process of law without resorting to open rebellion. They were able to bring their highest municipal officials to trial, to expose even the mayor's crimes and apparently to have him expelled from office and punished. In passing we may note how well Kushiharbe's trial brings out the usefulness of an independent judiciary.

One of the most surprising results of a study of the Nuzu tablets is the light they shed on the Patriarchal Age of the Old Testament: the period of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As we know, the social institutions at that age were not the same as they were among the later Israelites; for the laws that governed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not the same as the laws set down in the later 'Mosaic' law. What is surprising is that many of the peculiar social institutions of the patriarchal period are also characteristic of the Nuzu community. This is in itself a large subject, and I shall give only a few illustrations here. We recall that Abraham and Sarah were childless for a long time and that Eliezar, a slave, was made heir apparent of Abraham. It was normal, as we have seen in the Nuzu documents, for a childless couple to adopt a son (even from the slave class) to look after them. But in the Nuzu documents it was specified that if later a child should be born to that couple, he should be the heir, and not the adopted son. And in Scripture, God assured Abraham that Eliezar would not inherit him but that he would beget a real son as an heir. Eventually Isaac was born and so Eliezar naturally yielded to him the right to inherit.

Sarah, childless as she was, gave her handmaid Hagar to her husband, and interpreters have assumed she did that out of the goodness of her heart, but that was not the case. It was regularly stipulated in the marriage contracts of Nuzu that if a wife did not produce a child for her husband she was to supply

him with a handmaid who would, for the purpose of marriage was not companionship but the procreation of an heir to carry on the family line and the integrity of the home. It was also stipulated in the Nuzu documents that the wife was not allowed to drive out the offspring of the handmaid. Sarah did, of course, drive out Hagar and her son Ishmael; but it was necessary for God to give Abraham a special dispensation to allow this; so the thing must have been normally illegal, as in the Nuzu tablets.

Another strange feature of the Patriarchal Age is the selling of the birthright from brother to brother. We know that Esau, in exchange for a mess of lentils, sold his birthright to his grasping brother Jacob. There is a direct parallel to this in one of the tablets dealing with a Nuzu family. Kurpazah, the son of Hilbishuh, got a grove belonging to his brother Tupkitilla in exchange for three sheep. Obviously when a man exchanges a fertile grove, which is probably to be one of his chief means of subsistence, and perhaps his only inheritance portion, it means only one thing: that it was dictated by dire necessity; specifically, to avert starvation. We know that Jacob took advantage of Esau in a similar situation.

The family of Hilbishuh appears over and over in the annals of Nuzu, in the second worst series of scandals of this town. A number of characters figure in them, and as we read them we feel like some old gossip who has lived in a small town for eighty years and knows all the doings and misdoings of the other residents.

In another case, Kurpazah committed assault and battery on the wife of his brother, Matteshub. In still another court record, Matteshub testified that he saw his brother Kurpazah stealing sheep from the estate of still another brother, Tupkitilla. So we see that the accuser, the culprit, and the informer, are all brothers: the shameful sons of Hilbishuh.

Before closing this discussion we might well observe that the relations between Laban and Jacob are particularly replete with Nuzu parallels. We shall mention only the most striking of many points: that curious episode of Rachel's stealing her father's household gods. This has puzzled commentators greatly, but we now know from the Nuzu documents that the possession of the household gods was reserved for a real son;



not for a son-in-law or adopted son. Since Laban had sons of his own, Jacob's household was not entitled to them. Rachel stole them to secure for her husband and their children, rights and privileges legally reserved for her brothers, one of whom would normally have become the chief heir.<sup>46</sup>

## Military Correspondence from the Last Days of Judah



THERE ARE CERTAIN HANDICAPS in dealing with subjects that touch on the Bible, because people tend to take either an over-conservative or an over-radical attitude in such matters. I am often asked whether archaeological discoveries have 'proved' the Bible, or 'disproved' the Bible. The fact is that archaeological discoveries are not supposed either to prove or disprove Scripture. However, archaeological discoveries coming from the world in which the Scriptures were written indisputably add to the sum total of our knowledge of that world and give us perspective as well as more individual facts.<sup>47</sup>

Most of the inscriptions bearing on Biblical times have come not from Palestine but from other parts of the Near East, especially Mesopotamia and Egypt. Palestine itself has yielded relatively few texts from remote antiquity.

At the outset, we must evaluate briefly the Old Testament as a historical document. The Old Testament is essentially a pro-Judean and anti-Israelite book, representing the point of view of the Southern Kingdom as against that of the Northern. In the Bible every single king of Israel is a wicked king, causing the people to err, and, often enough, worse than his fathers before him. The kings of Judah, to be sure, are not all made out to be saints; they are represented sometimes as good and sometimes bad; but the kings of Israel, as portrayed in the Old Testament, are quite beyond redemption.

We can go still further with regard to the Old Testament, and say that it is not only pro-Judean but specifically pro-Jerusalemite; with now a lack of consideration, and now a disregard, for the provinces. This is more or less the necessary result of the fact that the government, as well as the religious cult, were centralized at Jerusalem, and any



decentralization, religiously as well as politically, would be looked upon askance by the Jerusalem party. For this reason, the Biblical evidence for the Judean provinces is biased and sketchy.

One of the great mounds south-west of Jerusalem is Tell ed Duweir, the location of the ancient city of Lachish. Tell ed Duweir is an imposing mound. It attracted the attention of the late Mr J. L. Starkey, who was one of the finest technicians in Palestinian field archaeology. His excavations were models of neatness, and deserved the fine results that they yielded. Starkey at Tell ed Duweir found the most important collection of Hebrew inscriptions ever discovered. All his colleagues regretted his unfortunate death on January 10, 1938, when he disregarded the advice of his colleagues and fearlessly attempted to motor to Jerusalem. Palestine was then in a chaotic condition and he was murdered by Arabs en route.

The Lachish texts are ostraca.<sup>48</sup> An ostrakon is a piece of pottery inscribed with ink. Unfortunately, inscriptions on parchment and on papyrus normally decay with the years in the moist soil of Palestine.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, such materials have been preserved extensively only in Egypt, where the dryness of the soil keeps organic matter from decomposing. Luckily stone and ostraca are spared regardless of climate.

Most of the Lachish ostraca are letters; the only letters that have come down to us from the ancient Hebrew people.

We might note that (with the exception of the Qumran scrolls) the two oldest known extensive manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible date from 895 and 916 A.D., respectively, so that even the best available manuscripts of Scripture are copies of copies of copies, and some corruptions have certainly crept in.<sup>50</sup> In my opinion, the corruptions are surprisingly few, but the manuscripts cannot possibly be just as they were when first written. The inscriptions on our ostraca, however, have come to us unchanged (save where the ink has faded); and therefore, as such are more authentic word for word, and letter for letter, than our manuscripts of the Bible. I am not saying that this group of letters from an ancient mound in Palestine is of greater value historically than the Bible; far from it. The Scriptures are a mine of source material, where the ostraca are but a drop in the bucket compared with all we know of the Hebrew people

from the Bible. But what little is in the ostraca is textually more authentic, all things being equal.

The ostraca reflect one of the great moments in human history. Palestine was one of the little buffer states between the Babylonian and Egyptian empires. The Neo-Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar had grown from strength to strength and was engulfing everything. The Egyptian empire had long been decadent. The Judean king was a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. Unfortunately, the defiant spirit of independence, characteristic of the ancient Hebrew people, challenged the authority of the great Nebuchadnezzar, and such a course could only lead to their military defeat. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar made his first onslaught against Judah, reduced the country, and took captive the king, who was only eighteen years old. The latter is known to us under two Hebrew names: Konyahu, or Yehoyakin.<sup>51</sup> He was carried off to Babylon; but for the Jewish people he was the legitimate successor of the house of David; and accordingly, in the opening chapter of the New Testament, the ancestry of Jesus is traced through him and not through Zedekiah, the last king who ruled at Jerusalem.

The country was greatly impoverished by the first Babylonian captivity (in 597 B.C.) not so much by the things as by the human beings that were taken away. Nebuchadnezzar's policy was to deplete a subjected land of its aristocrats, its craftsmen, its leaders, and the whole upper crust of the population, leaving only the poorest behind.

Mattanyahu, a close kinsman of Konyahu, was selected by Nebuchadnezzar and placed upon the throne of Judah. Mattanyahu is generally known by the name Nebuchadnezzar gave him on that occasion; to wit, Zedekiah. He swore allegiance as a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar, and he remained loyal until he was induced by the independence party to revolt. Doubtless he was encouraged in this also by Egyptian propagandists and others who wished to break the grip Nebuchadnezzar had on Western Asia.

In the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar came against the cities of Judah, and before long all but three of the fortified cities—the capital, Jerusalem, and Azeqa and Lachish to the south-west, were in the hands of the Babylonians.

Most of what we know of this period is found recorded in the



Book of Jeremiah, who was the great personality during the last days of Judah. He started out as a member of a priestly family in the little village of Anathoth, north of Jerusalem, but he abandoned his priestly calling and his home and went to the capital, where he felt his message should be delivered. Like all the prophets, he was essentially interested in establishing justice within the matrix of Yahwism. His policy was that of loyalty to Babylon; at least he considered it foolish to resist Nebuchadnezzar. He was definitely anti-Egyptian. His book is full of exquisite poetry as well as of prose accounts of historic events; but what is important for us to note is that it tells essentially of happenings in Jerusalem; necessarily so for the final period when the capital was cut off by the two-year siege by the Babylonians. So for a first-hand glimpse into what was happening in the provinces in those critical days, we turn to the new inscriptions.

The texts reflect a tragic situation: a little people fighting against all odds and whose chief arms were courage and faith in God. The characters mentioned are not those of the Biblical account. The army men and prophets of our ostraca would be unsung and forgotten if it were not for the texts, eighteen of which came to light in 1935, and three more in 1938.

Unfortunately, only the first four of the twenty-one texts can be translated with more or less completeness. The difficulty in interpreting even the unbroken ostraca arises from two facts: one, that the ink is faded, so that it is exceedingly hard to establish with certainty the identity of many (alphabetic) letters—though the forms of all the letters of the alphabet are known; the other, that the style is very terse: the writers will mention one topic in one brief sentence and then change the subject in the next short sentence. The style is, so to speak, telegraphic. The correspondents understood the letters without trouble, since they were keeping in constant touch with one another; while *we* can only guess at what is reflected in this correspondence between the ancient leaders of the southern forces of Judah. We await further progress in deciphering the ostraca, but any advance made in this field is not likely to result from the study of printed texts or articles on the subject. The one reliable source available to every scholar is the photographs published in an English edition and in the less sumptuous (but

later and complete) Hebrew edition. All the additional equipment the scholar needs is a pair of good eyes, a magnifying glass, a knowledge of Hebrew idiom and palaeography, and, above all, common sense. The growing results of many scholars' labours are steadily extracting the history enshrined in the ostraca.

In the two preceding chapters, we have dealt with great groups of texts, whose rich contents we have had to summarize. But here the material itself is so limited in quantity that we can deal with the complete texts, one after the other, provided that the necessary background is supplied as we go along.

In the first document there is no account of any action. It is merely a list of five men, named, in accordance with Hebrew custom, after the pattern: X the son of Y. Virtually all of the names end in *-yabu*, the form that 'Yahweh' takes when used at the end of personal names (as is characteristic of the personal names in the Bible during this period). This is interesting because it reflects the fact that the Hebrews during the generation that preceded the destruction of the First Temple in 586, were not guilty of using names containing pagan divine elements; for the written records clearly show them giving their children Yahweh names. One must remember that this was not always so, and in some early periods things were quite different. Thus, a grandson of King Saul, for instance, was named Meribaal, after Baal. So undivided devotion to Yahweh was not characteristic of the Hebrews throughout all their history.<sup>51a</sup> Some of the characters in 'Ostrakon 1' have the same names as certain Old Testament characters, but they are not to be identified with them any more than one 'John Smith' need be the same as another of the same name. Here is the text, which may well have been used as a sort of roll call:

*Gemaryabu son of Hissilyabu*  
*Yaāzanyabu son of Tovshillem*  
*Hagav son of Yaāzanyabu*  
*Mivtabyabu son of Yirmiyabu*  
*Mattanyabu son of Neriyaabu*

Yirmiyahu is normally Anglicized as Jeremiah, the same as the name of the prophet. Mattanyahu was the name of Zedekiah



before he was appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar. And Neriyaahu is none other than the name of the father of Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch. Yaāzanyahu occurs in the English Bible as 'Jaazaniah' and on a seal found in the excavations at Tell en Nasba, north of Jerusalem; all from the same age. In other words, the names fit in perfectly with other names known to us from this period of Bible history.

The second document is a letter. According to the etiquette of the Hebrew language, you should normally address your superior not in the second but in the third person: not 'thou', but 'my lord'; while you refer to yourself also in the third person: not 'I', but 'thy slave' or 'his slave'. Furthermore, though this may sound odd to Occidental ears, you may refer to yourself as a dog: 'thy slave, a (or thy) dog'. This occurs not only in the Hebrew Scriptures, but also in the Amarna letters from Canaan.

This first letter starts with the equivalent of an 'address': 'To my lord——'. The person addressed is Yaūsh, who is apparently commander-in-chief of the forces in the district of Lachish and Azeqa. He was probably an able leader and evidently put up a brave fight, while keeping in constant touch with his men. Following the 'address' comes the greeting, which is a new one in literature and is so pleasing that some of the teachers of modern Hebrew have tried to reintroduce it into the colloquial and written language. It occurs in variant form thus: 'May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of good' or 'tidings of peace', or 'to see tidings of peace'. The body of the letter is introduced with the phrase 'Now at present; now at present', which might be rendered in colloquial English: 'Now to get down to business'.

This epistle may well contain a veiled reference to a military operation in progress, with the hope that it will prove to be successful. The writer also acknowledges the receipt of a letter which the general Yaūsh had sent him some time before. This is a literal translation of Ostrakon No. 2:

*To my lord, Yaūsh. May Yabweh cause my lord to bear tidings of peace! Now at present; now at present: Who is thy slave, a dog, that my lord hath remembered his slave? May Yabweh cause something(?)<sup>52</sup> that thou dost not know, to bear fruit(?).<sup>53</sup>*

In the third inscription, an officer, Hoshayahu, is writing to his superior, doubtless the same Yaüsh; for all the texts but one were found together and probably form a single file of correspondence sent to the commander-in-chief. In this letter the writer refers to a letter he had received the day before, and is upset about a misunderstanding alluded to in it. He has been scolded for not reading or not heeding a letter, and he explains that he never received it and so could not read it; he protests his innocence and swears by Yahweh. I should perhaps call attention to the fact that the commandment 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' is generally misunderstood, and does not mean what the English translation conveys to Anglo-Saxon ears. It should be translated: 'Do not swear to a falsehood by the name of Yahweh, thy God'. Jeremiah, for instance, tells the people they should swear more (not less) by Yahweh, but stop swearing by other gods. Thus the Bible teaches that it is sinful either to swear anything by a false god, or to swear falsely by the true God. The ostraca give us no grounds for suspecting the Judean leaders of swearing by Baal or other pagan gods, or of turning away from the true God. All swearing in official circles is definitely by Yahweh, the national God of Judah. After protesting his innocence and swearing it by Yahweh, Hoshayahu reports various news items to his superior. Thus a 'captain of the host' named Konyahu (?), had gone down to Egypt, taking with him Hodoyahu and his men from the place where this letter was written. The Book of Jeremiah refers to campaigns to Egypt either for help or for supplies, and this was natural, for if the Judeans were fleeing from the Babylonians, there was no other place of escape, and if they wanted to get food, there was no other place to procure it. This, then, quite reflects the conditions as we know them from Scripture. Hoshayahu reports also that he had forwarded a letter of warning from Toviya, 'the slave of the king', that had been delivered to a man named Shallum by a prophet. This prophet was not necessarily, nor even probably, Jeremiah himself, for there were a number of prophets active at the time; he was perhaps a prophet who advocated devotion to Yahweh as did Jeremiah, but who left no book behind him. The warning of the prophet (?) may have been just one of exhortation to his fellow Judeans to be faithful to Yahweh. 'The slave of the king'



is a high title, designating not a slave, but a kind of minister of state. 'The king' can be none other than Zedekiah, though he is never mentioned by name; in these texts he is always referred to by title alone.

This is text No. 3, the most extensive and circumstantial letter of the collection:

*Thy slave Hosbayabu is sending to tell my lord Ya'ush: May Yabweb cause my lord to bear tidings of peace! And [now] thy slave is s[ending a lett]er [t]o the signal-spotter<sup>54</sup> [and] i[n i]t thy slave refers to the letter my lord sent thy slave yesterday. For the heart of thy slave hath been sick since thou didst send unto thy slave. And when my lord saith: Canst thou not read a letter? by Yabweb, nobody ever attempted to read me a letter, nor have I read any letter that came to me! . . . I deposited it . . . (a letter?; the writing is faint and the context unclear). And it hath been related to thy slave saying: The captain of the host, Konyabu (?), son of Elnatan, went down to enter Egypt and sent to take Hodoyabu, son of Abiyabu, and his men from here. And as for the letter of Tovi-yabu, the slave of the king, which came to Shallum from the prophet saying: Be on thy guard! thy slave hath sent it to my lord.*

The fourth ostrakon informs the superior that the sender has followed all the superior's orders and written them 'on the door'. It is not likely that many Judeans, military or civilian, could read and so posting a notice on a door or bulletin board would not serve the same function it serves today in literate countries. The word written DLT means not only 'door' but also 'tablet, document' and it probably has this meaning here as it also has in Ugaritic tablet 142.

The writer informs his superior officer (in all probability Ya'ush) that the town of Beth ha Rafa (?) has been deserted. The superior has also been inquiring as to the whereabouts of a certain Semakyahu, who the writer reports has been taken and brought up to 'the city', which in all probability refers to Jerusalem. He suggests that the superior give specific instructions that he may go and fetch Semakyahu, who must be in the vicinity of the city. He assures his general that he has been looking for all the Lachish signals. It is interesting to note that



Seals 20 & 21





Seals 22, 23 & 24

they had some sort of conventional means of signalling: whether by fire, or by waving sticks in keeping with a kind of semaphore system, or by some other way, we do not yet know with certainty, but the Mishna is probably right in defining the term as a fire signal. What is certain is that the captains kept in touch with each other through a forerunner of telegraphy and reported in writing regularly to headquarters as to whether the signals were being sighted. At the end of the present letter, the writer remarks that while they are observing the signals of Lachish they cannot see the signals of Azeqa. This very likely means that Azeqa had already fallen into the hands of the Babylonian invaders. In laconic style, our writer thus records the fall of one of the three remaining cities. It is to be noted incidentally that the letter must have been written in the field, for the two cities in the district are referred to as places from which the signals are being, or should be, sighted. This is Text 4:

*May Yabweb now cause my lord to bear tidings of goodness! And now, in accordance with all my lord hath sent, thus hath thy slave done. I have written on the 'door' in accordance with all that my lord hath sent unto me. And when my lord sendeth concerning Beth ha Rafa (?) (I herewith report that) nobody is there. And as for Semakyabu, Sbemayabu hath taken him and brought him up to the city; and let my lord send thy slave thither! Where can he be except in its vicinity? Investigate (and my lord) will know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish in accordance with all the signs that my lord hath given for the signal of Azeqa hath not been sighted.*

The rest of the texts are unfortunately fragmentary, and it would be foolhardy to attempt a reconstruction of them here. For present purposes we may review the few clear passages and other interesting snatches.

In Ostrakon No. 5, the writer says to his superior: 'Thy slave hath returned the letters to my lord'. And at the end of the letter, the writer is either expressing modesty or defending himself against some accusation when he exclaims: 'How could thy slave help or hurt the king?', which might be paraphrased, 'Who am I, to do damage or to render assistance to Zedekiah?'



The following can be made out in No. 6:

*To my lord Ta'ush: May Yabweb cause my lord to see this present signal. Peace! Who is thy slave, a dog, that my lord hath sent him the letter of the King and the letters of the captain(s) saying: Read, I pray, and behold the words of the . . . are not good (for they are) to discourage the (people) . . . as Yabweb, thy God, liveth. . .*

The oath at the end is probably in support of the writer's innocence. The 'discouragement' may refer to the communication of some leader or agitator. Jeremiah, himself, was more than once accused of 'discouraging the people', or, to render the Hebrew literally, 'causing the hands of the people to drop'. It is true that he recommended surrender but we must give him the benefit of the doubt and interpret his advice as being intended for the welfare of the people and not to betray them.

In Ostrakon No. 16 there is another reference to a prophet, but he need not be the same as any mentioned in the other letters. It is very likely that in those times many prophets were in demand, to give the people the courage required by the agonizing crisis.

Text 20 is the only dated text. It begins 'In the ninth year'; that is, the fateful year in which Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine because of Zedekiah's revolt. All but one of the letters from Tell ed Duweir may well date between that year and the fall of Lachish which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (One text was found under the floor datable to Zedekiah and may therefore be assigned to 598 B.C. or earlier.)

After two years of siege the wall of Jerusalem was breached by the engines of Nebuchadnezzar, and for this we are given an exact date: the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, king of Judah. The king and some of his followers made their escape, but they did not get far. They were apprehended, and Zedekiah was brought to trial. After his sons were slain in his presence, his eyes were put out and he was taken in chains to Babylon to spend the rest of his life in darkness. The land was depleted of most of its best people for a second time but Jeremiah was spared. Nebuchadnezzar had heard of his career and his policy, and perhaps he respected him also as a man of God. Jeremiah, however, though favoured by the conqueror and

given his freedom, was hated by most of his co-religionists. Against his protests a group of them compelled him to accompany them to the Egypt that he loathed and it was there that he probably died.

The ostraca reflect a lost battle. However, the significance of those events is not to be judged in military terms, because it was the Exile itself that tore the Jews away from their land and thus forced upon them the historically momentous decision: either to conceive of their God as the universal God, or to give up any pretence that they were still under His protection in a foreign land. Up to that time, the general concept of Yahweh had been that of a national god having jurisdiction primarily over His own tiny country. But now the Jews accepted once and for all the idea that Yahweh was the only God and that His dominion was unbounded by time and space. Thus was the way paved for later Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Jeremiah, in spite of his mournful 'Jeremiads', expresses the constant hope of the return from exile and of the restoration of the Temple. That hope was fulfilled within the memory of some living men, when Cyrus of Persia in 538 B.C. permitted those of the exiles that wished, to return and to rebuild their temple in Zion.

The importance of the subject may justify the repetition of a few banal words before we close this chapter. It was the message of the prophets which set the standard of morals for the Western world down to the present. And the Yahweh by whom Yaüsh and his captains swear has become the God worshipped alike in Christendom and Islam.



## The Dead Sea Scrolls



IN 1947, DURING A PERIOD of confusion and strife in Palestine, several ancient scrolls reached the Syrian Archbishop Samuel in St Mark's Monastery, Jerusalem. Exactly how the first scrolls were found is already shrouded in folklore. A version current in Israel had it that hashish smugglers taking cover in caves near Khirbet Qumran chanced upon the documents. The more generally accepted version has it that Bedouin shepherds followed a stray goat into the cave that contained the hoard. A variant of this version narrates that a shepherd threw a stone into the cave-opening and heard the unexpected sound that proved to be the breaking of a pottery vessel containing documents.

The precise circumstances of the initial discovery are of no great importance. Archaeologists have since gone repeatedly to the Qumran area where they have excavated the Khirba and explored the caves. In the caves have been found fragments of virtually every Old Testament book, of several apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, and other documents peculiar to the sect of Jews who lived on the site of Khirbet Qumran.

The date of the material is fixed within a margin of two centuries either way by a Carbon-14 Test performed on the linen wrapping that protected one of the scrolls. This test hinges on the fact that all living matter ingests a radioactive substance known as Carbon-14. Upon dying, all matter ceases to ingest it, and the Carbon-14 diminishes in radioactivity according to a fixed ratio. Therefore the test indicates when the matter stopped living. The Qumran linen was made from flax harvested in the year 33 A.D., plus or minus 200 years. The earliest date is thus 167 B.C.; the latest is 233 A.D. This not only rules out the mediaeval date previously proposed by several scholars, but even precludes a Byzantine date.

The archaeological discoveries at Khirbet Qumran point to a Roman date, and the coins (which stop short of 70 A.D., when Titus captured Jerusalem and crushed the First Jewish Revolt) suggest that the Qumran sectarians hid their sacred texts in the caves lest they fall into the hands of the victorious Roman legions a little before 70 A.D.

That the cave finds go with the Khirbet Qumran finds, is indicated by the presence of the same elongated Roman jars found in both the Khirba excavations as well as scroll caves.

The sensational character of the discovery produced a search throughout the countless caves between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. The searchers were not only archaeologists but also Arab herdsmen. The most important of the other sets of caves is at Murabba'at, about twelve miles south of Qumran. The Murabba'at documents include texts dated in the rule of Bar Kokhba, who headed the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome between 132 and 135 A.D. Thus the Murabba'at texts are dated, giving a fixed point in early Hebrew palaeography. That the Qumran script is palaeographically earlier than the Murabba'at script confirms the evidence that the Qumran scrolls were inscribed not later than the first century A.D.<sup>55</sup> Actually, the contents of the Qumran texts point to an origin around the first half of the first century B.C. for the establishment of the sect.

Other investigators have found still other caves and ruins in different localities east of Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea, containing ancient texts of other periods: Greek and Arabic. All this shows that, in many ages, Palestinians may have hidden documents in caves; and that such groups of finds have to be dated, each according to its own contents and context.

Scholarship tends to be compartmentalized; each group of specialists being a repository of knowledge kept in a small professional circle. The sensational nature of a discovery such as the Dead Sea Scrolls brings the topic to the attention of many people in various walks of life, lay and scholarly. This has the wholesome effect of bringing all sorts of miscellaneous data bearing on the problem to the full light of day. Various specialists pointed out that at the beginning of the third century A.D., the Church Father Origen knew of Hebrew texts found in a part of the general Qumran area; that the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy wrote to the Metropolitan of Elam about other



Hebrew texts found about 800 A.D. in a cave in that vicinity; and that Qirqisani (an outstanding writer of the Karaite sect of Jews in the tenth century A.D.) recorded a sect of Jews known as Magharia ('Cavefolk') whose documents had come to light and whose origin was pre-Christian. Karaitologists also discovered that burial customs of the Karaites coincided with those of the Qumran sectarians insofar as the deceased's head points south; and that the Karaite prayer book refers to the Teacher of Righteousness: a personage prominent in the Qumran scrolls. Another scholar pointed out that Hebrew texts from caves around the Dead Sea were noted in a history about the mediaeval converts to Judaism known as the Khazars: the East Asiatic settlers who established a strong kingdom in southern Russia and (in the eighth century; before their conversion to Judaism) saved Europe from being overrun by the Moslem hordes on the east flank, even as Charles Martel turned back the Moslem invasion on the west flank.

Unmistakable connections between the Qumran scrolls and Hebrew texts discovered half a century ago were soon detected. Those texts, known as the Zadokite Fragments, are known from copies of mediaeval date. Some scholars, losing sight of the fact that the date when a text is written proves only that its contents cannot be later than the time of writing, forget that there is no limit to how much earlier any element in the document can be. The Bibles in our libraries and homes often enough bear a publication date in the twentieth century A.D., and yet all of the biblical books printed therein are ancient. Overlooking so simple a matter can lead one into the grotesque error of dating the Qumran scrolls centuries too late instead of dating elements in the mediaeval copies of the Zadokite documents centuries earlier.

Judaism today is essentially non-sectarian, but around the time of the birth of Christianity this was not the case. Judaism in Palestine was then divided into three main sectarian groupings: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The Pharisees were the rabbinic party that proved to be the mainstream of normative Judaism. The Sadducees were the aristocratic, priestly group. The Essenes were puristic Jews who separated themselves from normal society and banded together in little communities where they tried to live up to austere ideals of

brotherhood, communal sharing, spiritual study, faith, obedience, and democratic local government. Some Essene communities excluded women; others did not. Philo and particularly Josephus had a high regard for the Essenes. The Qumran community has Essene affinities *vis-à-vis* Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Qumran texts reflect developments going back to the Maccabean Period in the second and first centuries B.C. Under the leadership of the Maccabean House, Palestinian Jewry succeeded for a time in shaking off the yoke of Seleucid domination and establishing an independent state. But the record of the Maccabeans was not untarnished and the principles of legitimacy were not on their side. In brief, the traditional sensibilities of the Jewish people favoured the harmonious separation of church and state. The Judean dynasty of David was entitled to the kingship, while the high-priesthood was reserved for the descendants of Zadok, Solomon's high priest in the First Temple. The Maccabeans, through victory on the battlefield, became the secular rulers of the Jewish State, though they were not of the Tribe of Judah. On the contrary, they were a priestly family; but their control of the Temple and of the high-priesthood was considered a usurpation because they were not of the House of Zadok. All of these forces produced reactions, one of which developed into the Essene movement that looked for the kingdom of God through channels other than the contemporary secular and religious Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. In the Qumran Scrolls, the priestly leaders are the Sons of Zadok; the sectarian saint is the Teacher of Righteousness whose revelations transcend those of the Prophets, and who perished at the hands of the Wicked Priest. Cutting themselves off from the official currents of Jewry, the Qumran sectarians retreated to the wastelands overlooking the Dead Sea, separating themselves from the evils of this world, and lived what they considered the good life in expectation of the day when the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel would come to usher in the Golden Age.

The Qumran settlement was not alone, but one of many. The whole area was alive with sectarian personalities and thinking. John the Baptist, an atypical Jewish personality whose career unfolded in the same general area and time as the Qumran



community, has inescapable affinities with the Qumran sectarians. Baptism is only the most obvious feature in the common denominator between John and the Qumranites. Baptismal pools have been unearthed in Khirbet Qumran.

The numerous Old Testament documents found at Qumran are of importance for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Heretofore, Hebrew biblical manuscripts were limited to copies starting almost a thousand years later than the Qumran texts. Between Qumran and the hitherto earliest known texts of the Hebrew Bible, a drastic development had taken place in Judaism. An official text, called the Masoretic Text, was established by Jewish scholars and forced (doubtless with rabbinical authority) upon the Jewish people in such a way as to doom the non-Masoretic texts to disappearance. The Masoretes used excellent judgment in fixing their text. Moreover they went back to texts that antedated the Qumran texts, at least in the system of spelling. But in spite of the high quality of the Masorah, the process was destructive to the extent that it wiped out a vast corpus of variant manuscripts. The biblical texts from Qumran constitute a valuable collection of pre-Masoretic manuscripts, throwing light on the transmission of the Hebrew Bible before the Masoretic process of selection and elimination.<sup>66</sup>

Qumran's contributions to biblical learning are many in detail. For instance the Commentary on Habakkuk covers only the first two chapters of that biblical book; the third or final chapter, which is a psalm, is omitted, suggesting that it may have been a secondary addition to the prophecy. Moreover, a Daniel fragment shows the same transition from Hebrew to Aramaic in the exact same verse as the Masoretic text, indicating that the Hebrew of Daniel is not a later translation from Aramaic as scholars have often proposed. (The Qumran material is of particular interest for Daniel, since the latter may have been composed as little as a century before the Qumran copy was made.)

Among the non-biblical texts are fragments of commentaries on Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Psalms and especially on Habakkuk. An Aramaic apocryphon about the heroes of Genesis with midrashic additions throws light on the development of targumic literature (i.e., the Bible translated into the popular Jewish language: Aramaic). Furthermore, some of the additions

hark back to ancient features of the original narratives expunged from the Bible. Fragments, in the original Hebrew, of pseudepigraphical intertestamental books, such as Jubilees and the Testament of Levi, show that the sectarians were devoted to religious writings that normative Judaism and normative Christianity have sloughed off.

The emphasis on Isaiah at Qumran is interesting. No book is better represented there; in addition to the fairly complete manuscript of Isaiah, there is also an extensive set of fragments. Rabbinic Judaism stresses the Pentateuch above the rest of Scripture; but the New Testament leans heavily on Isaiah too, tying in with the prominence of Isaiah among sectarians of the Qumran type.

Jubilees is of significance because an issue was made among the sectarians about the calendar. Celebrating festivals on the right days was an issue of paramount importance. The sectarian calendar according to Jubilees and Enoch is quite different from the Babylonian calendar used by normative Judaism. The sectarian calendar has a year of 364 days (exactly fifty-two weeks) in which any date will fall on the same day of the week year after year; the year being divided into four seasons of three months each; the first two months of each season having thirty days each, the last month of each season having thirty-one days. In contrast, the Babylonian calendar consists of twelve lunar months, with a leap month added from time to time in order to keep the lunar year from falling behind the solar year. This meant that the rabbinic and sectarian Jews branded as spurious the dates of each other's festivals.

Since the value of any moment in history can most objectively be estimated by what it led to, the value of the Qumran Scrolls lies mainly in the light they throw on the origins of Christianity. The Qumranites were not Christians; their writings are pre-Christian and mention no Christian personages. There is no evidence that specific Christians had any direct contact with Khirbet Qumran. Christianity, like any great movement, has its own individuality. But like all successful revolutions, Christianity could not have been established in a vacuum; it required historic preparation and the right spiritual climate. If Jesus had been carried off to the land of Eskimos, his message as recorded in the Gospels would have had no effect, even if translated into



Eskimo. And Paul's Epistles, so pregnant with meaning to so many people steeped in Judeo-Hellenistic culture around the Mediterranean, could have meant nothing to his contemporaries in Central Africa or the Far East. Normative Judaism in Greco-Roman Palestine can explain some, but not all, of the background of the New Testament; the sectarian Jewish background is also of great significance. What little we knew about the Essenes was limited to statements about them, such as those in the writings of Philo, Josephus, and Pliny. But now in the Qumran Scrolls, notably in the Manual of Discipline, we have an 'Essenoid' literature by the sectarians themselves with a first-hand statement of their own ideas and pattern of living.

That the Dead Sea Scrolls should force a reappraisal of the New Testament is a foregone conclusion. Yet that reappraisal is meeting with resistance from many quarters, erudite and otherwise. The reason for this lies in large measure in the accidents of discovery. Archaeological discovery is not distributed evenly across the ages; nor are recent periods automatically more favoured by archaeology than are early eras. The ancient Age of the simple Patriarchs has been richly illuminated by unexpected discoveries since 1925, while virtually no extra-biblical data have been found bearing on the later conquests of David from the Euphrates to the Egyptian border. Old Testament study has been revolutionized by successive discoveries in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan, Anatolia, etc. Whatever controversy was needed before Old Testament scholarship could be made flexible enough to adjust itself to a growing body of source-discoveries, took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus the reappraisal of Hebrew civilization on the basis of Ugaritic literature since 1929, when the tablets were first found at Ugarit, took place without serious resistance because the 'Babel and Bible' controversy had already accustomed Old Testament scholars to making major readjustments in their thinking. But until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, no major archaeological discovery bearing on the New Testament had been made. Accordingly, New Testament scholarship is now going through its first stage of reappraisal based on newly found documents of prime importance. This first reappraisal will pave the way for further reappraisals as future discoveries make them necessary.

The Manual of Discipline depicts the division of the community into a paramilitary organization; into tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands; each unit with its officer. This concept of a 'Synagogue Militant', though not continued in normative Judaism, lives on in its reflex 'The Church Militant'. Like so many other aspects of Christianity, so too this one stems from Judaism and was not (as has been supposed) borrowed from Gentile sources.

The Commentary of Habakkuk states the conditions of salvation in the following formulation: (In Habakkuk 2:4 'the righteous will live by his faith' refers to) 'all who perform the Law in the house of Judah whom God will save from the house of judgment on account of their labour and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness'. That Jews who perform the Law, please God thereby, is a basic concept in normative Judaism too. But what is strange to normative Judaism is the doctrine that faith in a man constitutes a condition of salvation.<sup>57</sup> The 'Teacher of Righteousness' is a historic person, regarded by his followers as eclipsing the Old Testament prophets; he was killed through the machinations of the 'Wicked Priest' and was thought to have reappeared after his assassination to exact vengeance on his enemies. Personal identification of Jesus with the Teacher of Righteousness is impossible on chronological as well as on other grounds; Jesus was born more than half a century after the Teacher of Righteousness was killed. The importance of the Teacher lies in his showing that there were Jewish circles believing in salvation through a latter-day personage who transcended the prophets of old. The Teacher of Righteousness was one of the men who paved the way for Jesus of Nazareth; both are reflexes of the spiritual milieu in Greco-Roman Jewish Palestine. The Scrolls thus help bridge the gap between Judaism and Christianity. And salvation through faith in a master (fundamental to Christianity) turns out not to be alien to Judaism, but only to normative Judaism. Sectarian Jews like those in Qumran had faith in the Teacher of Righteousness, along much the same lines as the first Christians had faith in Jesus. John the Baptist was not the only non-normative Jew who paved the way.

Normative Judaism has abandoned the concept of a New Covenant, eclipsing the Old Testament. Officially, the Jewish view, to this day, is that the Hebrew Bible contains the com-



plete and final covenant between God and His people. In Christianity, however, the New Testament or New Covenant fulfils, and thus goes beyond the Old Testament. The Qumran sectarians built their life around a New Covenant; only for them it was not the New Testament but membership in the Qumran community with all its rules, institutions and way of life. What such Jewish sectarians and the first Christians have in common is adherence to a New Covenant, in contrast to normative Judaism which ignores any New Covenant.

The Qumran community consisted of Zadokite priests, then Levites, and finally the lay Majority. The priests outranked the Levites; thus the priests had the privilege of blessing the good while the Levites had the unpleasant task of cursing the evil. The subordinate role of the Levites explains the fact that even today they are fewer in number than the priests. Since the priests are (theoretically at least) only one segment of the Tribe of Levi, Levites should outnumber priests. What happened is that since the return in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Levites throughout Second Temple times tended to evade sacerdotal service, with the result that more priests than Levites volunteered to serve in the Second Temple, as their ancestors had served in the First Temple. Consequently, to this day, the average synagogue has more priests than Levites among its membership.

The strong Qumran emphasis on Majority rule, albeit under sacerdotal leadership, is at the root of the democratic government in communities of the Qumran type. A council of twelve, plus three priests exemplary in the Law, constituted a special branch of the government. The twelve have been compared with the twelve Apostles.

A quorum consisted of ten members of the community,<sup>58</sup> including one priest at the helm. It was specified that one member of the quorum should always be engaged in study; whether they took turns studying, or whether one particular member of the quorum was a full-time student, is not explicitly stated.

Each novice had to go through a two-year initiation before acceptance as a full-fledged member of the community. At the end of the first year, his record would be investigated by the priests and lay Majority. If their report was favourable, he would gain conditional membership and his material assets and

labour would be placed on the community ledgers under the supervision of the Overseer. Only after the second year, however, does the candidate achieve final and complete membership.

Qumran must have been only one of many 'Essenoid' communities; and such communities, insofar as they were of like mind, were probably in communion with each other. Perhaps there was even a federation of utopian monasteries to which Qumran belonged.

The wealth of the individual had to be turned over to the community through the Overseer. Communal wealth means personal poverty; and this insistence on personal poverty ties in with New Testament ideals.

Communal meals with holy sacraments are emphasized in the Manual of Discipline, with blessings for the bread and wine. This is still a feature in Jewish home ritual; in Christianity, following the precedent of the Last Supper, the same sacraments are infused with a new meaning: the bread being the flesh and the wine the blood of Christ.

The study of spiritual topics was so important in Qumran that one third of the nights of the year were to be devoted to it. In Judaism, a high premium is placed on study, not only of 'The Torah' (i.e., the Pentateuch) but also on simply 'torah' (the sum total of spiritual concern). This persists among the élite of normative Judaism down to the present day. Its most classical expression can be found in the sayings of the rabbis in the *Pirke Abot* 'Ethics of the Fathers' in the Mishna. The Qumranites shared with other Jewish groups the conviction that the saving grace of man did not consist solely of faith, but required knowledge gained through diligent study as well. In the Hellenistic world, there was a spiritual movement known as 'Gnosticism' that stressed knowledge as the saving grace of mankind. Insofar as Judaism (Qumranite or normative) requires study on the part of the individual who would become and remain pleasing in the eyes of God, Judaism reflects a major feature of Gnosticism. Be it remembered that in classical Hebrew times, there was no such emphasis; Abraham, David, and Isaiah were not scholars like Hillel, Shammai, or Akiba. It was post-Hellenistic Judaism that ranked scholarship above other personal qualities and accomplishments. And this Jewish standard is the most striking survival of Gnosticism in the world today.



The Qumranites had a democratic, parliamentary government. Under priestly guidance, the Majority ruled in accordance with deliberations in the community assembly. Any member who desired to address the assembly could do so after requesting and getting permission to speak. Once a member had the floor, no other member could interrupt him. Orderly parliamentary procedure, with each speaker taking his turn, is delineated in the Manual of Discipline.

Exemplary conduct was required of all the members. Lying was punishable by exclusion from the communal honours and privileges for one year, and by loss of one fourth the rations. Kindness to one's neighbours is an indispensable virtue in any closely knit community like Qumran. Exclusion for one year is thus meted out to anyone who behaves impatiently or stubbornly with his fellow. Loud and stupid laughter drew a six-month penalty. Spitting in the assembly, which was punishable by thirty days exclusion, refers not so much to an unsanitary act, as to an act of disrespect and impatience (for the impetuous god Baal is described in a tablet of the fourteenth century B.C. as spitting in the assembly of the gods without restraint). Informing on a member drew a year of exclusion; but informing on the community as a whole was punishable with irrevocable expulsion.

The character expected of members includes several traits such as intelligent understanding, faith in God's works, and reliance on His mercy.

The literary expression of prayer and devotion in the Scrolls is generally good, and in places rises to heights worthy of any liturgy. As a sample, we translate the closing lines of the Manual of Discipline (11:11-21):

*And as for me, if I falter, the loving kindness of God is my salvation for ever; and if I stumble in the sin of flesh, my cause will abide in the justice of God for eternity; and if my foe assail (?), He will save my soul from the pit and establish my feet on the way. He has drawn me near into His mercies, and into His loving kindness comes my cause. In the righteousness of His truth He judges me, and in the abundance of His goodness He forgives all my sins, and in His righteousness He cleanses me of the impurity of mankind and of the sin of Adam's sons, so that (we may) thank*

*God for His righteousness, yea the Most High for His glory. Blessed art Thou, O my God, Who opens the heart of Thy slave unto knowledge. Prepare in justice all his works, and establish for the son of Thy handmaid as Thou hast willed for the elect of mankind to stand in Thy presence for ever. For without Thee no way is perfect, and against Thy will naught can be done. Thou hast taught all knowledge, and all that has come to pass, has happened in accordance with Thy will. There is none besides Thee to retort to Thy counsel and to ponder all Thy holy design; to look into the depth of Thy mysteries, and to contemplate all Thy wonders with the strength of Thy might. And who can contain Thy glory? And what is the son of man among Thy wondrous works, and of what account is (man) born of woman in Thy presence?*

The Scrolls from the Dead Sea are not only supplying fresh source material for the study of the Jewish Palestinian background of Christianity. They are also (thanks to the wide public attention they have attracted) extracting from various highly specialized circles long-known facts that bear upon the problem of Judeo-Christian history at the dawn of the present era. Mandaic, rabbinic, Gnostic, pseudepigraphical and many other esoteric branches of learning are contributing to the synthesis that is now taking place, because of the Scrolls.<sup>59</sup>



## The Fathers of Egypt



GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS PLACED Egypt in the Greco-Roman world and consequently ancient Egyptian civilization was doomed. The cumbersome scripts of antiquity—hieroglyphic, hieratic and demotic—could not compete with the simple Greek alphabet. That an easy script should replace a complicated one, might seem desirable enough for a nation. But the victory of the Greek letters tolled the death-knell of the older pagan systems of writing with the result that in Roman times all primary knowledge of ancient Egyptian literature came to an end, and it was not until the nineteenth century that western scholars deciphered the hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic texts. Strange as it may seem, it is possible for a great civilization to perish on its own soil, in spite of the continuity of the race of men that fostered it.

As a part of the Greco-Roman complex, Egypt underwent a revolution not only in writing, but also in religion. Christianity was victorious over the old native paganism of the Nile Valley, and of the Jewish and Greco-Roman cults in Alexandria. But Christianity in Egypt was distinctive and national; too much so to be subservient to Constantinople or Rome. The Copts (as the Egyptian Christians are called) are an independent Orthodox Church, with its Scriptures and liturgy in Coptic: the native Egyptian language written in a slightly modified Greek script.<sup>60</sup>

Two factors must be borne in mind when we examine the ancient Copts, especially those in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. First they are Egyptians; second, they are at the same time members of the Greco-Roman world. They are distinctive as Egyptians; but as members of the Greco-Roman family, they share much in common with other branches of that complex.

The long-suffering Egyptians had chafed for so many centuries under foreign overlords, that (1) escape from the evils of



Seals 25 & 26





Seals 27 & 28

this world, and (2) salvation, were earnestly sought after. The extensive deserts that flank the Nile provided abundant retreats for the monks and hermits of Coptic Egypt. Sometimes the escape was on a low spiritual level. Records show that many a debtor retired to the desert to evade his creditors. Others turned to the desert to get away from the evils and burdens of civilization.<sup>61</sup> But to the genuine Coptic monks, and especially hermits, life in the desert was not escapism; to the contrary, it was the most positive kind of struggle. Belief in Satan and in demons was universal; and they were thought to inhabit the desert. Accordingly the monks, and particularly the hermits, were courageous men who fearlessly went to fight the Enemy on his own ground. Their unquestioning belief brought them the most frightful apparitions. And lucky was the hermit whose way of life was so perfect that the demons stopped tormenting him each night.

A group of texts, known as Anecdotes of the Coptic Fathers, preserves tales of the monks and hermits, and delineates their life and thought.<sup>62</sup> The basic problem underlying the anecdotes is: How can we live the good life? Or stated differently: How can we achieve inner repose?

Somebody asked a Coptic elder how to get peace of mind. The elder replied that first one must get the external senses (such as vision, etc.) functioning properly, for only then can the inner man achieve tranquillity and health. Thus the sage advocated a sound body as the prerequisite for a sound mind.

To the deeply religious Copt, well-being was inconceivable without the fear of God. A monk once asked Father Paese: 'What shall I do to my heart, for it's hard? I don't fear God.' Paese replied: 'Go join yourself to a monk who fears God and from his piety you will become God-fearing.' The Fathers knew that virtue as well as vice is contagious and that good company is a sure way to personal improvement.

Another anecdote provides a different technique for self improvement. Some Syrian worthies came to Father Poimen to ask him what could be done about hardness of heart. But Poimen could not speak Greek; nor was there an interpreter to translate his wisdom into Greek for the Syrians. Yet nothing is impossible for saints. When Poimen saw how troubled his Syrian visitors were, he told them what they needed to know *in Greek*.



*The nature of water is soft, but that of rock is hard. The pitcher bangs over the stone, dripping down on it (gradually wearing into it). So is the word of God which is soft, though our heart is hard. If a man hears the word of God many times, it causes the heart to open and fear in His presence.*

Thus frequent exposure to the teachings of Scripture can help us become better men.

The two anecdotes above might convey the notion that the Coptic formula for virtue was a banal combination of piety and Bible. Actually there is much more to it than that. Salvation to the Coptic sages required a largeness of spirit and strength of character. One of the elders said: 'He who will bear up under scorn and derision, has in him the power to be saved.'

What we call neuroses and frustrations, were personified as demons. When an elder was asked 'Why do demons contend with us so?', he answered: 'Because we have thrown away our weapons, which are: contempt (for worldly things), humility, inaccessibility, and patience.'

Not all of the Coptic saints were male. Among the women was the Blessed Synkletike who said: 'Just as a ship cannot stay afloat without nail(s), so it is impossible to be saved without humility of heart'.

Humility of heart is a basic virtue that the Fathers often discuss. One tale runs thus:

*Once in the Thebaid, some people who had a demoniac came to an elder so that he might cure him. After they had urged the elder much, he said to the demon: 'Get out of this creature of God.' The demon spoke to the elder: 'I'm coming out, but I've got to question you on one matter. Who are the goats and who are the sheep?' The elder replied: 'I am [of] the goats. As for the sheep, God knows them.' When the demon heard this, he said: 'Behold I am getting out because of your humility of heart.'*

Such narratives presuppose a detailed cultural background. What we would call a psychiatric case was a demoniac to the Egyptians; and his cure could be effected only by exorcizing the demon. The saintly elders were credited with the power to expel demons, and yet were loath to do so; partly because the reputa-

tion they would thereby gain would bring them fame, and fame brings on the deadly sin of pride. Accordingly the narrator explains that the sage yielded only after much urging. The demon spoke through the mouth of its victim; for where such beliefs were held, the insane acted the part of the demon with proficiency. On the question 'Who are the goats (= sinners) and who are the sheep (= saints)?' hinges the point of the story. The temptation is for the saint to tell the unclean spirit: 'I am saved and you are damned'. But such pride, even on the part of saints, is fatal. A good man must not boast of his own salvation nor condemn the other fellow even if the latter be the Devil himself. And if one can attain such a standard, the forces of evil will vanish from his presence.

The sages also knew that without assuming personal responsibility, we can have no character. An elder said: 'In every temptation, don't blame anyone else, but blame only yourself, saying: "These things have befallen me because of my sins."'

As throughout recorded history, the Mediterranean (and especially the Levant) constituted a cultural continuum in Coptic times. The Fathers of Egypt, far from being in isolation, had numerous contacts with other lands in the area, like Syria and Byzantium. One of the anecdotes relates:

*A monk of Egypt was in a suburb of Constantinople during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius. The Emperor while going on the road there, left the crowd behind him, walked by himself and knocked at the monk's door. And (the monk) recognized who he was and received him like one of the common people. When they went in, they prayed and sat down. The Emperor began to question him, saying: 'How are our Fathers in Egypt?' (The monk) said: 'They all pray for your health.' And (the monk) told him to eat some bread (and) gave him a little oil with salt. (The Emperor) ate. And (the monk) gave him a little water. (The Emperor) drank. The Emperor said to him: 'Do you know who I am?' (The monk) said: 'God knows you.' Then he said: 'I am the Emperor Theodosius.' And immediately the elder prostrated himself to him. The Emperor said to him: 'Hail to you who are without cares in this world! Truly, since I was born in royalty, I have never filled my belly with bread or water as today. Nor did I know they were so sweet.' From that day the Emperor began to praise him. So the elder got up, fled and returned to Egypt.'*



Many features of the anecdotes appear in this tale. For example, the simple life, with prayers preceding a modest meal of dried bread moistened and made palatable with a bit of oil and salt, and of water as the only beverage. The monks also tend to know the identity of all comers: human or demonic. The monk knows his visitor is the Emperor but he does not want to admit it because the relationship could only be destructive of the monk's way of life. Deference to royalty is compatible with the life of a court flatterer, but not with that of a saint. And when the Emperor begins to praise the monk, the latter has to choose between flight and becoming a public figure obliged to pay the price of notoriety: endless distractions and the pitfall of pride. So back to Egypt fled the monk where he could live simply, in humility and inaccessibility, without which men suffer endless torments.

Of course, even in Egypt the fame of the Fathers exposed them to public pressures fraught with danger to their humility and detachment. How was a Father to help people and yet live the good life? There is a story about Father Longinus who tried to live obscurely, but yet his fame spread in spite of his efforts to the contrary. A woman with a breast cancer heard about Father Longinus and went to find him. She came across him gathering wood, but not recognizing him, asked: 'Where is Father Longinus, the servant of God?' Sensing the nature of her mission, the Father asked her: 'What do you want with that mountebank?' Urging her not to go to Longinus, he asked what her trouble was and she showed him the diseased area. He made the sign of the cross over it and said: 'Go! God will heal you. Longinus will not do you any good'. She believed him and was instantly cured. Later she told some people about it and described her benefactor. Her listeners solved the mystery without difficulty and exclaimed: 'That's Father Longinus!'

Even though the monks left urban society, they stressed the need to get along with fellow man. After all, monastic brotherhoods require harmonious human relations at least as much as other forms of society. One of the anecdotes tells that 'two brothers dwelt in one place for many years. They never quarrelled with each other, but lived in peace till the day of their death.'

Unless men are at peace with one another, the Divine Presence will not be found in their midst; not even in church. To illustrate this, it is related that when the priests made the offering, an eagle (symbolizing the Divine Presence and visible only to the priests) used to descend on it. It happened once that one of the brothers asked the deacon for something, but the deacon refused saying: 'I haven't got the time.' On account of the deacon's lack of brotherly helpfulness, the eagle stopped coming. The presbyter, realizing the Divine Presence had forsaken them because of a sin committed by one of those who made the offering, said to the deacon: 'Either you or I have done some wrong. Stand back so that I may see whether (the eagle) doesn't descend on account of you, or of me.' The presbyter's plan revealed that the deacon was at fault. The latter admitted that he had not made time to grant a brother's request. The presbyter told him: '(The eagle) has not descended on your account, because the brother is angry with you.' The deacon thereupon went and begged his brother's forgiveness. . . . As long as men have grievances against each other, God does not abide with them or accept their gifts.

Another narrative brings out the Coptic Fathers' premium on human relations. What may strike the modern reader is that efficiency and production are sacrificed for the sake of the other fellow's feelings.

*They told about one of the brothers that he was making baskets and putting handles on them. He heard his neighbour say: 'What shall I do? The work is advanced and I have no handles to put on my baskets.' So he went and unfastened the handles which he had put on his own baskets, brought them to the brother (and said): 'Behold I have these which are superfluous for me. Take them! Put them on your baskets!' And so he caused his brother's work to advance; and retarded his own.*

Virtue was often formulated negatively, in terms of abstaining from evils, one of which was speech. 'It is told of Father Hor that he never lied, nor swore nor cursed anybody; nor did he speak except through necessity'. There are many tales about the silence of holy men. It is to be noted that the silence was not



absolute; instead speech was kept to the minimum required by actual need.

The anecdotes recognize that negative silence is inferior to positive virtue, though it is the next best thing.

*A brother asked an elder: 'What is humility of heart?' The elder said to him: 'That you should do good to those who do you evil.' The brother said to him: 'If one can't attain this standard, what should be done?' The elder said: 'Let him choose for himself silence.'*

But let there be no mistake about it. Among the activities and states of mankind, silence eclipses speech:

*Once the blessed Father Archbishop Theophilus went to Shiet. The brothers (there) assembled and said to (their own elder) Father Pambo: 'Tell one thing to the Papa (Theophilus) so that he may derive benefit.' The elder replied to them: 'If he derives no benefit from our silence, he will derive none if we talk.'*

The sages of the desert knew that the city was full of pitfalls, and that church business in Alexandria was no excuse for sightseeing.

*The presbyter of Shiet once went to the Archbishop of Alexandria and when he returned to Shiet, the brothers asked him: 'What's the city like?' But he said to them: 'Alas, O my brothers, I did not look on the face of anyone except the Archbishop alone.' When they heard, they made a ruling because of the statement, that they should beware of wandering of the eyes.*

By now the reader will have noticed that the anecdotes are concerned with high standards of conduct. It is therefore natural that the stories often reflect a curiosity in, and the desire to know and emulate, the high standards set by others. Two of the Egyptian Fathers begged the Lord to show them the standard they should try to attain. They were then informed that they had not reached the standard of a layman named Eucharistos and his wife Maria who dwelt in a certain town. The Fathers went there and asked Maria: 'Where's your husband?' She replied: 'He's a shepherd pasturing the sheep.' She took them into the

house where they waited till evening, when Eucharistos came home and set the table for them and brought water to wash their feet. The Fathers realized that a perfect man like Eucharistos would not be so immodest as to reveal willingly the nature of his virtue. They therefore had to use pressure of an extraordinary character. So they began by saying: 'We won't eat unless you first tell us your way of life.' But Eucharistos replied only: 'I am a shepherd and this is my wife.' When urgings proved to be of no avail, they played their trump card by announcing to him: 'God has sent us to you.' This broke his restraint and, fearing God, he said:

*'These sheep are ours from our fathers, and (the wool) that God gives us on them, we divide three ways: one part for the poor, another for the strangers, and the remaining part we take for ourselves. Since I took my wife we have not been stained, neither I nor she, but have remained virgins . . . and till now no one has known these things'. When (the two Fathers) heard, they marvelled and went into retirement from that place.*

As in all these tales, the life and thought of the times are reflected. It is to be noted that the best property is not that gained by acquisitiveness, but that inherited from one's fathers. Moreover, while it is a virtue to take care of one's inheritance, that virtue is immeasurably increased if one is philanthropic with the proceeds. The objects of philanthropy are the poor and the stranger. Chastity outranks normal marital relations; but marriage is to be kept as sacred even though it is not consummated. Note too, that it is possible for laymen in a normal community, and looking after the economy of their own menage, to set so high a standard of virtue, that the worthy Fathers of the desert upon seeing that standard, can do nothing except retire to the desert and try again.

Another story shows that the highest of standards can be set by foreigners, and perhaps the choice of foreigners as the heroes reflects a desire to inculcate kindness to the stranger. The narrative tells that two young foreigners came to Shiet, looking for Father Makarios. On locating him, they prostrated themselves and said: 'We want to dwell here.' But Makarios, seeing that they looked like tender bodies accustomed to material



advantages, remarked: 'You won't be able to stay here.' The older of the two foreigners retorted: 'If we can't stay here, we'll go to another place'. Then Makarios thought to himself that it was not his place to repulse newcomers; they had a right to try the austere life of Shiet, and, if they were as frail as he suspected, the austerity would suffice to drive them away. So Father Makarios showed them how to hew wood and stone and construct therewith a cell. The foreigners then inquired about the daily work they were to perform, and Makarios showed them how to weave baskets which a guard would market for them and bring them bread in exchange. The two youths did everything patiently and three years went by. They left their cell only to go to church; they kept silence; and partook of the holy mysteries. Father Makarios sensed that they had reached a high standard of conduct and now he was consumed with a curiosity to learn their secret. So he fasted and prayed for a week that God might reveal to him their way of life. Then he proceeded to their cell and knocked at their door. Greeted in silence, he entered, prayed and sat down. The older youth, weaving in silence, signalled to the younger to go out. The latter obeyed and returned at the ninth hour with food which he set on the table. After the meal, the Father was asked if he would go, but he insisted on staying overnight. So of the two beds in the room, one was assigned to the Father, and the other to the two youths. After all had gone to bed, the Father prayed that God would reveal their secret, whereupon the roof opened and a light shone like the sun at noon. Thinking that the Father was asleep, the older lad woke the younger and they stretched their hands heavenward. The Father observed that demons were flying like flies over the younger one, but an angel drove them away with a sword. No demons, however, molested the older, for he had achieved perfection. It was the younger who was still combatting the forces of evil in his struggle to become perfect; and God was helping him through an angel. Then they went back to sleep but Father Makarios pretended that he had just woken up. The older lad asked Makarios: 'Do you wish that we should recite a dozen Psalms?' and the Father said: 'Yes'. The younger lad recited five Psalms of six verses each with one halleluia, and for each verse a flame went out of his mouth up to heaven. Then the older began to chant Psalms, and on opening his mouth, a

great verse of fire went forth and reached heaven. Father Makarios then recited a few selections of Scripture that he knew by heart and went out saying: 'Pray for me!' But instead the lads in true humility prostrated themselves, offering their confession in silence. The Father knew that 'the older was perfect but the Enemy was still fighting with the younger'. A few days later, the older died; three days more, and the younger passed away. Father Makarios then took a company of elders to the cell and said: 'Come and look at the martyrdom of the little foreigners'.

The motif of an exemplary life ending triumphantly in death will reappear later in our survey of the Egyptian anecdotes.

The spiritual life does not go hand in hand with luxurious living. Man can produce high thinking on a meagre diet.

*One of the elders went to another elder and said to his disciple: 'Prepare us a little lentils.' And he prepared it. He added: 'Moisten some loaves for us.' And he moistened them. Then they kept conversing about spiritual matters all the day and all the night.*

In passing we may note that it is customary to bake a supply of bread to last for weeks or even months. Accordingly it gets so dry and hard that it must be moistened before it is soft enough to eat. . . . Of greater importance is the 'conversation about spiritual matters'. While this feature of the good life is not often mentioned in the anecdotes, it is (as this tale attests) part of the picture. In rabbinic literature, it crops up constantly under the name of *torab*. This feature of religion in the Hellenistic world cuts across national and denominational lines, though it appears more frequently in the Judaism of Western Asia than in the Christianity of Egypt. The difference is one of degree rather than of kind.

Humility is taught, in several of the anecdotes, by a striking test-situation.

*The elders said: 'If in truth an angel appears to you, don't receive him unto yourself, but humble yourself and say: "I am not worthy to look upon an angel, since I have been living in sin".'*

It may appear to the less humble western reader that this is stretching humility rather far, but another story explains the



danger in welcoming angels. For how do we know that what seems to be an angel is not Satan in disguise?

*The Devil changed himself into the form of an angel of light. He appeared to one of the brothers and said to him: 'I am Gabriel whom they have sent to you.' He replied to him: 'They must have sent you to another one of the brothers. I am not worthy.' And (the Devil) immediately vanished.*

There are other stories that show how humility is necessary if we are to be saved from temptations.

*The demons said to another elder wishing to ensnare him: 'Would you like to see Christ?' He said to them: 'You are anathema together with what you said is Christ. My Christ, in whom I believe, is he who declared: "If anyone say to you 'Behold the Christ in this place or that', don't believe!"' And immediately they vanished.*

The sages knew that Satan gains our confidence by assuming pious forms, and by implanting in us thoughts that are harmful despite their sugar coating. And yet every real sage could detect Satan no matter what the latter's disguise. In fact only the undisciplined monk could be taken in. The story goes that Father Makarios saw Satan in human shape wearing a priestly garb that was full of holes from which bottles were suspended. The Father asked: 'Where are you going?' Satan gave an equivocal answer: 'I am going to give a thought to the brothers.' On the surface this might mean he wants to remember them with gifts; but it could also reflect his real intention: to implant impure thoughts in their minds and so ruin them. Makarios asked further: 'What are you going to do with all these bottles?' Satan replied that the bottles contained various wines for the brothers; and that from such an assortment, one could surely be found to appeal to any individual brother. So Satan went on to the brothers and, later, on his return, again encountered Father Makarios who inquired about the brothers. Satan reported that they had all behaved badly toward him except one brother named Theopentos, who, said Satan, 'listens to me, and when he sees me, comes like a child'. Makarios knew that all the brothers except Theopentos were on their guard and safe. The

sage's problem therefore was to fortify and save Theopentós. So Makarios went to the brothers and sought out Theopentós, who received him cordially. The sage asked: 'How are your affairs?' and Theopentós replied: 'They are fine, thanks to your prayers.' But the sage knew better and inquired further: 'Don't thoughts fight with you?' Theopentós answered: 'I am doing fine now', but he was troubled as he spoke, for Satan had implanted evil thoughts in him. Makarios, to gain the confidence of the brother, made the following simulated confession: 'I have lived the ascetic life for many years and everyone praises me. Yet, though I am old, the spirit of whoredom gives me pain.' These words broke down the brother's reserve and the latter said: 'I believe these things, O my Father, for they pain me too.' Then Father Makarios found a pretext and mentioned other thoughts that supposedly troubled him until Theopentós broke down and confessed his impure thoughts. The Father asked him: 'How do you fast?' Theopentós replied: 'Until the ninth hour.' The Father enjoined upon him a stricter way of life: 'Fast until evening and be ascetic and recite what you know by heart from the Gospels and the rest of Scripture and, if a thought comes to you, do not look on the ground, but always look at the sky and immediately God will help you.' Having instructed Theopentós, Makarios returned to his desert haunts where he eventually saw Satan en route to tempt the brothers once more. 'Where are you going?' inquired the Father. 'I'm going to give a thought to the brothers', replied the Evil One. The Father waited until Satan returned from his sinister mission and, on asking the Evil One about the brothers, got this reply: 'They are all angry at me and the worst is the one who used to obey me, being my friend. I do not know how he came to hate me but he has become, more than the rest, angry at me. I've sworn I won't ever go back to them again.' After saying this, Satan departed. The holy man then retired into his cell, knowing that he had saved Theopentós from Satan's temptations.

Saving sinners requires diverse methods. To save a harlot, Father Serapion made a professional engagement with her, saying: 'I am coming to you this evening; get ready.' But when he arrived, he said: 'Wait a little for me. I have a custom that I must fulfil.' He then proceeded to recite all the Psalms, and,



upon completing them, he made three genuflections. The woman, in fear and trembling, remained praying behind him. He too prayed, that God might save her, and God heard him. She prostrated herself at the Father's feet and begged: 'Be kind, O my Father; take me to the place where you know I'll be saved. God has sent you to me for this.' He took her to a convent for girls (*partbenos*)<sup>63</sup> and said to the mother superior: 'Take this sister and don't lay yoke or command upon her. But let her do as she wishes. Leave her to God.' After a few days, the former harlot said: 'I am a sinner. I want to eat once a day.' After a while she decided to eat only once a week. Then she chose the austere life of solitary confinement, saying: 'Since I have committed many sins, bring me into a cell and serve what I'm to eat through a window with my handiwork.' The end of the story may sound tragic to western ears, but from the Egyptian viewpoint, it is the happy ending: 'She pleased God and fell asleep in that place in the Lord.'

Father Papnoute went so far as to break a rule of asceticism so that he might deflect men from evil and guide them on the path of righteousness. The anecdote runs as follows:

*It is related that Father Papnoute was in no hurry to drink wine. Once, while strolling, he came upon a band of thieves and found them drinking. The ringleader recognized him and knew that he did not drink wine. He looked at him in great pain, filled a cup of wine, with his sword in his hand, and said to the elder: 'If you do not drink, I am going to kill you.' The elder, wishing to do the command of God and desiring to profit by the opportunity, took the cup and drank the wine. This moved the ringleader of the thieves to confess thus: 'Forgive me, Father, for I have caused you pain.' The Father said to him: 'I have faith in God that He will show you grace because of this cup of wine, in this life and in the one to come.' The robber chief said to him: 'I believe in God and from now on, I shall not do evil to anybody.' The elder won for himself the entire band because he had put behind him his own will for the sake of God.*

As throughout the ancient world, dreams were taken to be divine revelations in Christian Egypt. From early youth the Blessed Ephrem was destined to become a constantly increasing source of spiritual sustenance. The anecdote runs thus: 'When

the Blessed Ephrem was a little boy, he beheld a dream' in which:

*a grapevine sprouted from his tongue and grew and filled all the earth under heaven. Its fruit was very good and all the birds of heaven came, lighted on its fruit, and whatever they would eat from the grapevine, it would grow back again more than before.*

Wondrous tales were spun about the famous historical saints. One such story is about Simeon the Stylite who, according to the anecdote, spent sixty years on a column without eating the food of mankind. This constituted a mystery that the public yearned to solve. Those around him suspected that a spirit was sustaining him. Twelve bishops prayed and fasted near Simeon, but he protested: 'I am a man like everyone else.' To determine whether it was really a spirit that fed Simeon, one of the bishops known to be faultless in his life was selected to sit on top of the pillar with Simeon. Faultless character was needed to perceive spirits. The surmise of the bishops proved to be right for an angel came from the east bringing angel-food to both men on the pillar. The faultless bishop descended to his colleagues and testified: 'I do not have to eat the food of mankind as long as I live because of that food.' The twelve bishops spread the testimony and everyone believed. During his life Simeon converted many to God by good works, and after his death numerous miracles were wrought through his holy body. Both before and after his death many were healed by him; and many of the peoples and heretics were turned to God.

The saints could perform all manner of wonders including bringing the dead back to life. Yet they refrained from doing so, so as not to thwart the will of God, Who gives life and death in accordance with His will. But the saints on occasion would resurrect a dead person just long enough for him to give testimony needed for establishing justice among the living. For instance Father Milesios saw a mob grabbing a monk as though he were a murderer. The Father, realizing the monk was innocent, asked where the corpse was. Led to it, he spread his hands to God and commanded: 'Pray, all of you!' The corpse rose and Milesios asked it: 'Who killed you?' The resurrected victim told how he had gone to church and given money to the



presbyter who thereupon slew him and removed the body. The victim begged Milesios: 'Take the money and give it to my children.' As soon as the mystery was thus solved so that justice could be done, Milesios restored him to the repose of death, saying: 'Sleep until God wakes you.'

Father Jijoi told another such tale. He was one of seven monks harvesting in Shiet with Father Makarios. A widow, exercising her biblical right to glean after the harvesters, followed them and wept constantly. Makarios inquired of the owner of the field: 'Why does this old woman weep so?' and the owner replied: 'While her husband was alive, some property belonging to a man was entrusted to him. Her husband died suddenly without telling where he put it. Now it cannot be found and its owner wants to take her and her children as slaves.' The Elder asked that the woman be brought for questioning at the resting place during the pause for the heat of the day, so that he might find out from her where she had buried her husband. Upon finding out, he sent her home, and went with the Brothers to the burial spot, where they prayed. When the deceased was brought back to consciousness, Makarios asked him: 'Where did you put the man's vessels?' The deceased replied: 'They lie in my house at the foot of the bed.' Makarios, having received the information, put the deceased back to rest with the words: 'Sleep till the day of resurrection.' Makarios and the Brothers went to the place, found the vessels and so rescued the woman and children from impending slavery. Makarios, of course, did not want the incident to enhance his fame, for pride is a sin and a snare. He accordingly declared: 'This has not happened on account of me. I am nobody. But for the sake of the widow and these orphans has God done this.' Everybody who heard how the woman and children won their freedom gave praise to God.

Some of the anecdotes tell how holy men were tricked into performing miracles unintentionally:

*There was someone in Egypt who had a crippled son. And he brought him and set him at the cell of Father Makarios and left him crying at the door, and went off at a distance. The elder peered out, noticed the little boy crying and said to him: 'Who brought you here?' (The boy) said: 'My father brought me, abandoned me and went*

*off.' The Elder said to him: 'Get up, run and overtake him!' And immediately he became whole, rose and overtook his father. And thus they went to their house rejoicing.*

The word of the man of God is effective even when it is extorted by guile. And guile must be used to extort miracles, when the men who can work them are averse to miracle-mongering.

There is one anecdote in which a sage was deceived into restoring the dead to life. Upon realizing what a great miracle he had unwittingly wrought, he was deeply distressed and wished only that the matter would never be divulged during his lifetime. The text runs thus:

*Once a layman with his son went to Father Jijoi who was in the Mountain of Father Antonius. And his son, on the way with him, died. And he was not disturbed, but in faith carried him to the Elder, and prostrated himself with his son as though to make confession to the Elder so that he might bless them. The father (then) arose, left his son at the Elder's feet, and went out of the cell. The Elder, thinking that (the child) was prostrate before him to get absolution, said to him: 'Arise and go away!' for he did not know that he had died. And immediately he arose, and went away. When his father saw, he marvelled and went in, prostrated himself to the Elder, and told him the affair. The Elder listened and was troubled. He had not wanted to act in this way. His disciple sent a message to them saying: 'Don't tell this to anyone while the Elder is in the body.'*

This story contains a clear formulation of the spirit of the age. It was an age of faith where nothing was impossible. The public, upon hearing such a tale, understood how the father of a dead child 'was not disturbed' but 'in faith' proceeded with the corpse that could be brought back to life by the word of the unwitting Elder. To the ancient Coptic listener, the noteworthy point of the story is not that a holy man could restore the dead to life, but that a parent was clever enough to trick the holy man into saying the wonder-working word.



## A World of Demons and Liliths



IT IS MY IMPRESSION that the social sciences often suffer from the fact that many scholars tend to stress the rational to the virtual exclusion of the irrational. The subject of this chapter is an irrational but real factor in human history.

Science as well as magic both stem from the desire to solve life's problems. The basic problems such as the maintenance of health, the attainment of material prosperity and security, and personal happiness, have occasioned both science and superstition. It is perhaps worthwhile here to make a fundamental distinction between science and superstition. If something appears plausible at a certain time, it may fairly be classified as scientific; but if it is later disproved and yet people adhere to it, it is then superstition. Thus to look down upon the ancient scientists of Babylonia because they believed in astrology, would be to lack historical perspective. But when a person in this day and age still adheres to the system of Sumero-Babylonian astrology, that is superstition.

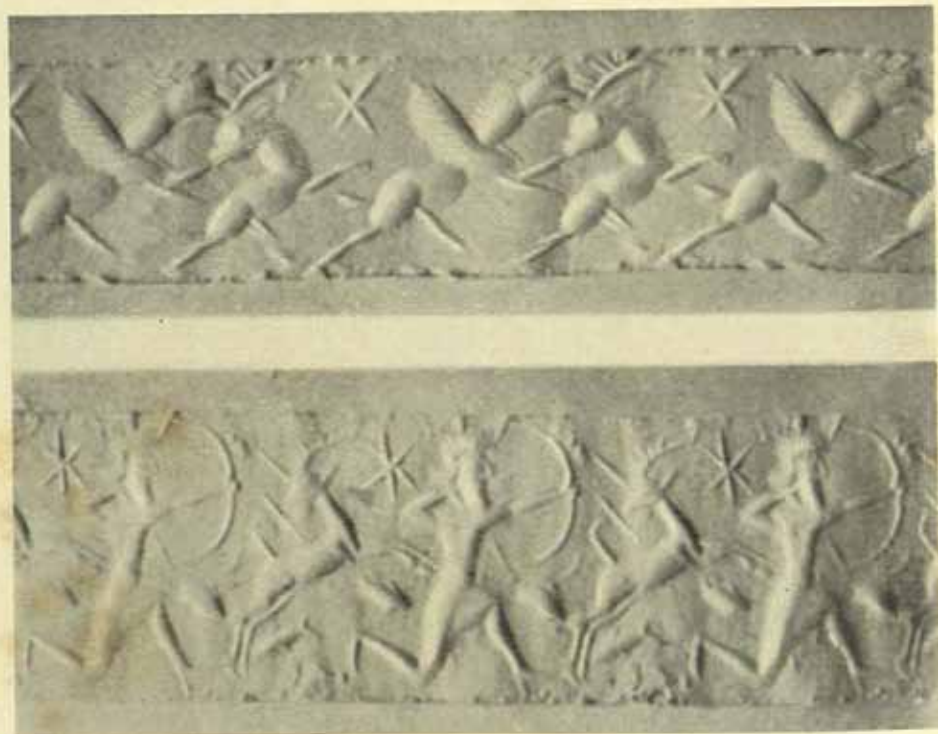
We should also make a basic distinction between science and magic. While science reckons with cause and effect, magic disregards causality. It is often held, but quite falsely, that savages prefer magic to science. Savages emphatically prefer science. For instance, once they learn the principles of irrigation, they stop depending on rituals for rain, because they can see that science regularly brings about the calculated effect, whereas magic obviously cannot be counted on to yield regularly the same results as science.

For the study of magic, as for all sociological studies, there are two main sources: living men and dead records. To work with living men is always preferable. The records of the dead are the best sources we have for past history, but they are relatively defective. When you observe living people practising magic you



Seals 29 & 30





Seals 31 & 32

see the magician's act (or praxis) as well as hear his words (or incantation). When you have only the written incantation the accompanying act can as a rule only be partially surmised from the words.

Incantation may be divided into two kinds: words that have meaning in themselves (words as they are ordinarily used in conversation) and sounds (or letters or even scrawling) that are normally meaningless (nonsense syllables). This nonsense element in magic is to some extent common to all peoples. We find traces of it in our folklore: e.g., 'eeny-meeny-miny-mo', 'Abracadabra,' 'Hocus pocus (dominocus)', and so forth. Some of these go back to meaningful speech, but they have long degenerated into the meaningless. As children, we fall heir to many vestiges of magic lore that we tend to relinquish as we grow up.

For many years I have been collecting a group of incantation texts in the museums of Asia, Europe, and America. They come from Babylonia<sup>64</sup> and are couched in a variety of Aramaic dialects. Christ's life was conducted through the medium of Aramaic, except for some Greek that he may have used with merchants, or the Hebrew quotations that he used in the synagogue or with the learned men of his people. The fact is that Aramaic is one of the landmarks in the linguistic history of the world. At the time of the great Achaemenian Empire (from the sixth century B.C.) it was the interprovincial language of the Empire, which at its height extended from India to Ethiopia. At the time of the Alexandrian conquest the two great languages were Greek and Aramaic; and Aramaic was not displaced until Arabic spread with the rise of Islam in and after the seventh century A.D.

The first Aramaic incantation comes from Uruk. It is a unique document, being the only known Aramaic text written in cuneiform characters on clay. It is just as curious as if one were to find an English document written in the hieroglyphs of Egypt.

However, the texts under discussion come from Sasanian Babylonia before and after 600 A.D. These inscriptions are written spirally on terra-cotta bowls; usually on the inside of the bowl, sometimes on the outside, and sometimes on both sides. Some scholars have advanced the theory that these bowls with their inscriptions were intended as traps for demons: the demon being forced into the bowl by the incantation, whereupon the bowl



is turned upside down and buried, thus trapping the demon in the ground. But this is based on false interpretations of the texts. The fact is that the last thing the ancients wished to do was to trap on their own property the demons which might subsequently escape and work mischief on the spot. The bowls are calculated to do the exact opposite: namely, to exorcize and get rid of them. While I therefore reject the aforementioned theory, I am not sure as to why the inscriptions were written on bowls. I have a theory, which I give as such for what it may be worth. A few skulls inscribed with incantations have been found from the same time and place. It is well known that a mass of superstitions and magical beliefs have always clustered around the dead and their skeletons, particularly their skulls; and these bowls, somewhat resembling the shape of the cranium, may have substituted the skulls that had been in use earlier.

As I have pointed out, the main purpose of magic is to protect the human beings who resort to it. The beginning of one of these charms expresses the purpose clearly: 'This charm is designed for the health, guarding and sealing of the house (of the client)'.<sup>65</sup>

The people who practised this magic were professional magicians who took the place of the physicians and scientists of our communities. To be hired as a magician, the practitioner has to have clients who believe he has magic powers. We sometimes find a magician professing his potency and magical ability in these words: 'I go in (magical) strength', whereupon he lists his magical equipment. The magician may express his confidence in his own magic by such a declaration as the following: 'I seize what I seek and what I ask for with the tongue I take.'

As for the clients: the most curious thing is that in the incantations they are never called 'So-and-so the son of such-and-such a father' as in daily life, but 'So-and-so the son of such-and-such a mother.' The reason is that magic must be exact, and since one can never be perfectly certain of one's father, genealogy through the mother is indicated. This is not due merely to a lack of faith in female fidelity. The trouble is that demons have the habit of impersonating husbands, so that a woman may be deceived unwittingly. Consequently, we find persons desiring magical protection from male demons and female *liliths* 'appearing to the sons of men; to men in the form of women and

to women in the form of men; lying with sons of men by night and by day'. This explains other peculiarities of life. For instance, if a child is downright naughty he has probably been sired by a demon. And if a child hates his father, he is not really the son of his presumable father, but of an impersonating demon. The notion that human beings and demons are constantly being hybridized explains in a charming, if not scientific, way most of life's difficulties. This makes human nature at its worst explicable. For if we were all descended purely from Adam, who was made in the image of God, and from Eve, who was fashioned from him by God, we ought to be better people than we are.

One of the features about magic is its precision, albeit misguided precision. For instance, one text informs us that the magician is writing this incantation 'on this day of all days, this month of all months, this year of all years, and this time of all times'. There are thus auspicious occasions and propitious times for effective magic.

All the carefulness that we now find in our judicial documents is found in these magical texts. The repetition that is common in them has a legalistic ring, and it is to make sure that everything is taken care of and nothing forgotten. Note the careful listing of the items to be protected in one of the incantation bowls:

*Let there be health from the heavens, and sealing and guarding unto the dwelling, threshold, residence and house and threshold of this Farukdad son of Zbinta and Qamoy daughter of Zarq and everything that they have, that this Farukdad son of Zbinta and this Qamoy daughter of Zarq may be preserved: they, their sons, daughters, oxen, asses, slaves, handmaids, all cattle great and small, that there are in this dwelling and threshold or may come to be therein—that there may be annulled from this dwelling and threshold of this Farukdad son of Zbinta and Qamoy daughter of Zarq, Aramaean spells, Jewish spells, Arabic spells, Persian spells, Mandaean spells, Greek spells, spells of the Romans; spells that are worked in the seventy languages either by women or men.*

Note too that lists such as this enumerate the possessions that these people owned: the sort of cattle they had, the sort of households, with male and female slaves, and so on. Even more interesting, this incantation gives a detailed picture of the



linguistic and ethnic elements of the community: 'Aramaean spells' refer to the incantations of which these inscriptions form part. There were three Aramaic dialects: Rabbinical Aramaic, Christian Aramaic (= Syriac) and Pagan Aramaic (= Mandaean). Large settlements of Jews had been in Babylonia since the days of Nebuchadnezzar and some are still there.<sup>66</sup> The Arabs were eventually to become the dominant element they are today. Some of the texts that have been found we suspect are Persian, but they have not yet been deciphered. However, many of the clients have good Persian names. The Mandaeans are the people sometimes called 'St-John-the-Baptist Christians'.<sup>67</sup> They still survive as a small sect in Iraq and Iran and are famous now for their metal work. Like many of the oriental Jews, Christians, and Moslems, the Mandaeans still practise magic on a wide scale. As for the mention of Greek and Roman elements in the community, we will recall Mesopotamia formed part of Alexander's Empire and of his Seleucid successors. It was later the frontier of the great Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire. The list also reproduces the belief that the languages of the world are seventy in number—actually a great underestimate.

The Babylonian community was, then as always, highly mixed, linguistically and ethnically; and we shall soon see that it was also conglomerate in religion, as the magic clearly reflects. There is a less detailed summary of the people in another incantation, which specifies: 'Spells of the west and east, spells of the north and south, spells of the 127 provinces'. The '127 provinces' refer obviously to the empire of 127 provinces of the Achaemenian Xerxes, called Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther. This is therefore a purely historical reminiscence that survived in magical formulae. We cannot assume that such formulae must refer to contemporary conditions; they may refer to much earlier periods. Magic is quite conservative, as a rule.

A characteristic of human beings in all ages is that they people the world with all sorts of terrors, as if things were not bad enough already. For instance, as if there were not enough murders today, we must have detective stories and crime magazines and even radio and television thrillers for children. Mankind seems eager to scare itself out of its wits, and it often succeeds. Let me tell of some of the creatures that the inhabitants of Sasanian Babylonia manufactured to frighten themselves

with: there was 'the Mighty Destroyer that kills a man from beside his wife and a woman from beside her husband, and sons and daughters from their father and mother by day and by night'; there was the demon 'whose height is 170 cubits and who sits under roof spouts and kills children'. Of course there were also vampires 'that eat of their (victims') flesh until they are full and drink of their blood until they are sated'.

It is interesting too that demons tend to be specialized, and this has a bearing on the history of science, especially the science of medicine. For instance, there is a special demon responsible for eye infections of a certain type. He is 'the evil spirit that sits on the brain and causes the eye to tear'. If you have migraine or other types of headache, still other demons are responsible. For each disease there is a separate demon; and interestingly enough these demons get into the victim from without: a belief that may well have paved the way for the germ theory, which is essentially the same thing, a specialized host that enters the victim from the outside. We also find the forerunner of the principle of immunization, in the helpful spirits that are used to counteract these demons: the antibodies, as it were, of the demonic world. Of course, the magicians who wrote the Aramaic bowls went far beyond the point justified by science as we know it. For instance, they held that a tremor on one side of the body was caused by a different demon from that causing a tremor on the other side. When a man felt troubled, it was due to the demon 'that strangles the thoughts of the heart'. Similarly with all other evils, from dumbness to psychopathic loquacity, each was caused by a special demon.

One feature of the magic was that undesirable things were personified and given demonic status. To the ancient Near East mentality, the word itself has a power<sup>68</sup> that is greatly feared. Since the Near Easterners are given to cursing on the slightest provocation, the power of their words is a serious matter. For even though they may not mean it, they believe that the fact that they have uttered the curse can harm the person cursed.

Sometimes the demons were personified to the point where a figure of the demon is drawn on the bowl. One bowl adds the explanation: 'This is the figure of the curse and lilith'.

Another evil force is what Oriental and other people call 'the



evil eye', or, more exactly, 'the evil and envious eye'. The fact that some people envy other people, or begrudge them the good things of life, is supposed to bring calamity upon the envied. To this day in the Near East you should never (at least among the uneducated) admire a baby, or remark that a child is pretty, for such admiration would be suspected as a form of casting the evil and envious eye, causing the curse of the evil eye to afflict the child. This concept is common in many parts of the world, but it is particularly prominent in the East.

Another demon is one for which we have no good word in English, but which the Germans call '*Poltergeist*'. This is a demon that causes people to shake. I remember that when I was in Baltimore in 1938, that part of the country was agog over the case of a girl six or seven years of age, who had a *Poltergeist* that shook not only her body but the bed she lay on. Oddly enough, *Poltergeists* are generally found in connection with children, and especially with little girls. Most are cases of exhibitionism whereby children wanting to attract attention get it by such spectacular means.

These texts specify many curses of relatives, particularly of female relatives. For instance, according to one incantation the client wishes to be protected 'from the curse, invocation, knock, evil eye, wicked sorceries, sorceries of mother and daughter, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, and of the presumptuous woman who makes the eyes go black and who blows away the soul'.

Another text summarizes the evil forces as follows: 'from the angels of destruction, from all the evil sorceries and mighty practices—from all spirits, devils, demons, lilis (the male counterparts of liliths), idols, strokes, curses, invocations, the curse, witchcraft, the evil and envious eye, and everything bad'. Note that the end of the formula is intended to guarantee completeness.

Demons do not always look demonic. They may take rather innocent and deceptive forms. For this reason, the wary client wishes to be protected also from disguised evil spirits, such as those 'that appear in the form of vermin or reptiles, in the form of beast or bird, and in the form of man or woman, and in any form or species'. Again, note the all-embracing end of the formula.

Curses and vows are also classified according to the authority giving them power, such as the deity sanctioning the magic. One client thus wishes to be immune from the curses 'which they have sworn and performed by the gods of the heaven and the gods of the earth; they have sworn by male gods and female goddesses'. This classification goes back to the old pagan inhabitants who lived there in the early third millennium B.C., for 'the gods of the heaven and the gods of the earth' is an old Sumero-Accadian classification of the gods.

In order to ensure completeness, one magician includes this formula: 'all the evil (demons) whose names are mentioned in this bowl or whose names are not mentioned in this bowl'.

So much for the demons and hostile forces that make life so painful. Now the question is: How is one to render the demons impotent? The symbol of rendering them harmless is that of tying, binding, or shackling them. One of the formulae is '(All the evil spirits) are bound, hobbled, and crushed under the left<sup>69</sup> heel of (the client)'. Perhaps the praxis accompanying this incantation was the client's crushing of images under his left heel. Another variant runs: '(All the spirits) are bound, tied, and sealed. Their mouths are closed, their eyes are blinded, their ears deafened, so that they cannot hear anything against (the client)'.

Once having bound and rendered them harmless, you have then to use a formula of exorcism, to drive them away from the body, the house, and the property of the client seeking protection. One such formula reads: 'Let them get out of the 148 parts of his body; let them not stand in his standing-place nor lie in his bed-chamber'. The fact that their being bound may impede their flight does not bother the magician, and we constantly find these contradictory combinations side by side in the same charm: 'Upset, turned back and repulsed are all the curses and invocations of all women, men, boys, girls, evil foes and enemies that they have cursed and invoked by night and by day. They are bound and turned away from the four corners of my house'.

There is a widespread belief that an undeserved curse will be, or may be, turned back upon the head of the curser. Thus cursing



is only legitimate after an offence has been committed. We have these unmerited curses directed back to their source by such charms as this:

*Bound are the hands and feet of the men and women who have worked evil against this Brikyabya son of Marat, and let all the evil spells be uprooted from this Brikyabya son of Marat and from his constellation and planet and from all his house and from all their dwelling, and let them be turned back and return and go to those that worked them and to those that sent them, from this day and forever, in the name of Yabweh, God of Hosts.*

It is interesting to note that 'from this day and forever' is a legal formula particularly common in bills of divorcement.

The situation is more complicated when the curse is deserved. Suppose you have injured someone, and out of the bitterness of his heart and not without justice, he has pronounced a malediction against you. You must then get him to consent to take back the curse and bless you so as to cancel it. There is a quaint Mandaean text in the Harvard Semitic Museum in which this procedure is reflected:

*(The guardian angel) has seized them by the tuft of the hair of their heads and by the tresses of their pates and said to them: 'Remove what you have cursed against this Abi daughter of Nanay'. And they said to him: 'From the anguish of our hearts we have cursed and from the bitterness of our palates we have resolved to curse'. . . . 'I make you swear and I adjure you in the name of (the protecting angels) that you release and free Abi from all the curses and invocations that you have cursed; and from the curses of father and mother . . . and from the curse of harlot and singing girl . . . and from the curse of employee and employer who stole his wages from him, and from the curse of brothers who have not divided (the inheritance) fairly'.*

This is not quite reasonable, for not only are these supposed to take back the curses they themselves have uttered, but also the curses pronounced by other people under other circumstances. And then finally comes the adjuration to give the blessing that will cancel and neutralize the original curse: '(The curses are

sent back) to those that pronounced them until they release, free, and bless'.

The specific ways of coping with demons are many and curious. First, you can adjure them and threaten them with dire consequences. There is one heroic figure named Qatros, whose lance kills demons and liliths; and if you threaten them with the lance of Qatros they become frightened and desist:

*I adjure thee, Lilith Hablas, granddaughter of Lilith Zarnay, the lilith that lodges on the threshold of the bouse of this (client)... that smites, shakes, throws, strangles, and slays . . . boys and girls . . . I adjure thee that thou be smitten in the membrane of thy heart by the lance of the mighty Qatros.*

Another way is to resort to divine authority either pagan or orthodox. In order to contend with a certain demoness who slays children, there is the following charm in the name of the old pagan gods:

*O Murderess, daughter of the Murderess! Get out and depart from the presence of. . . The Sun has sent me against thee, the Moon has despatched me, Bel has commissioned me, Nanay has said to me . . . and Nergal has given me the power that I might go against the evil spirit, namely Dodib, whom they call the Strangler that kills babies in the bosom of their mother.—Get out from before these angels that sons may remain alive for their mothers and little children for their fathers.*

And thus the killer is foiled. The magician may even appeal to the sixty male gods and eighty goddesses: the whole brood of pagan deities.

The Mandaeans have hypostasized Life, and their incantations often begin with the formula: 'In the name of the great, strange, abundant, and lofty Life!' and end with the formula: 'And Life is victorious!'

There may be an appeal to the Power 'who puts to flight every spirit, male or female, that has changed his place and come to a place that is not his own from the days of creation'.

Side by side with unorthodox invocations is the orthodox



invocation in the name of God. Many of the incantations begin with the formula: 'In Thy name do I act!'

One text is written in the name of the Lord but for a purpose that would hardly be looked upon with favour by the more conservative members of the community; for it smacks of black magic. But first we should refresh our memories regarding the difference between white and black magic.<sup>70</sup> Black magic takes the initiative to hurt other people; white magic is to cancel or prevent harm to the client. Black magic is offensive; white magic, defensive. This text is one of the very rare examples of love philtres. A woman named Ahat would obtain the love of a certain man by this spell: 'In the name of the Lord of heaven and earth! This bowl is designed for the name of Anur- son of Parkoy, that he may burn and be kindled and inflamed after Ahat—in the name of the angel Rahmiel and in the name of Dlibat the passionate'. Dlibat is one of the names of the goddess of love, and Rahmiel means literally 'love angel'; so that not only the true God is invoked at the beginning, but also one of the Hebrew angels and a pagan goddess at the end. When I was working in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania on some unpublished bowl texts I chanced on another love philtre, and it was by the same woman, for the same man!

Sometimes the Great Name of God is appealed to and it is described as 'the Great Name of which even the Angel of Death is afraid'. There are many Old Testament quotations<sup>71</sup> (nearly always in Hebrew; very rarely in Aramaic translation); and the orthodox guardian angels are often asked to give their protection.

Other sources of help are the seal of God and the seal of Solomon. Solomon has always enjoyed the reputation of a great master of spirits. Jewish literature, the Arabian Nights, and numerous other sources commemorate his fame in this capacity. Both the seals of God and of Solomon are appealed to in this formula: 'They, their house, their children and their possessions are sealed with the seal of El-Shadday, blessed be He, and with the seal of King Solomon son of David who worked spells on the male demons and female liliths'.

We are not to expect any consistency or any unadulterated standard of orthodoxy in these texts. The community, as we have seen, was composite; and this is reflected in their angelology

as well as in their demonology. Here pagan and Jewish elements are found side by side:

*Bound and sealed are the house and garden of this Shabor son of Elisbeba with seventy knots, seventy seals, seventy bonds, a chain, a rope, the seal of Yukabar-Ziwa son of Rabbe, the seal of the angel Kasdael, the great prince of the Chaldeans; the seal of the mighty angel Gabriel, the prince of fire; the seal of the demon Aspanadas, the jinnee of King Solomon son of David; and with the seal of the Great Master of the universe, Whose knot cannot be loosened and Whose seal cannot be broken.*

The orthodox at least may look with favour on the fact that the climax is the seal of the Lord Himself, Whose bond is supreme. God's bond is something that is to hold the whole universe in check till the day of judgment. One text reads thus: 'I bind you with the bond wherewith the seven planets and twelve signs of the zodiac are bound unto the great day of judgment and the great hour of salvation'.

There are various ways of dealing directly with demons, as with people. One is the appeasement policy. You may not like demons, but you can appease them by offering them hospitality. Oriental hospitality consists of welcoming the guest into your house, offering him food and drink, and bringing him something to soothe his skin, such as oil or perfume, or at least water to wash his feet. One text gives, presumably in the name of the client and not of the magician, the following formula:

*I went up to the roof at night and said to them: 'If ye are hungry, come eat! And if ye are thirsty, come drink! And if ye are dry, come be anointed! But if ye are neither hungry, nor thirsty, nor dry, return and go by the way on which ye have come and enter the house from which ye went and enter the mouth from which ye went'.*

In other words, the demons may be invisible to you, but you have done your best; you have invited them in, and offered them every possible hospitality. The fact that they have not accepted your hospitality, your meat, drink, and oil, shows that they are perfectly satisfied, that they bear you no grudge, and that they will go back where they came from.



In one variant of this formula there is a definite refusal by the demons; presumably, since they evidently did not come in, the demons had declined the invitation: 'We (the clients) went up to the roof and said: "All ye bad spells, bad vows and hated practices that have passed by our door—enter!—here is meat to eat and here is wine to drink". They opened their mouths and said to us: "Who wants to enter your house?"'

The policy of intimidation is frequently attested in incantation literature. In the following there is intimidation by force of arms (as well as appeal to authority): 'If ye say anything against (the clients), I am going to draw the bow against you and stretch the string against you. And if ye do anything (to the clients), I am going to bring down the decree of heaven and the ban which is upon Mount Hermon and the monster Leviathan'.

One of the quaintest ways of dealing with demons is by the use of a certain legal procedure for divorce. In Christendom divorce is often a long-drawn-out and fairly costly process, which only the rich can afford and which even they cannot obtain quickly. But in the Orient a man can dismiss his wife without delay or difficulty. Accordingly, the divorce formulae were appropriated by the magician to drive out demons and particularly liliths:

*Lo, I have written to thee! Lo, I have dismissed thee and lo, I have abandoned thee and lo, I have banished thee with a bill of divorcement!—Just as devils and demons write and serve (bills of divorcement) on their wives and they never return to them . . . so thou, O wicked lilith . . . take thy document of dismissal and thy letter of banishment and flee, fly, get out and depart from this (client and her husband) . . . and do not appear to them in visions of the day or in apparitions of the night, in the guise of either man or woman.*

A great expert in serving bills of divorcement on liliths was Joshua son of Perahya, well-known in ancient Rabbinic literature, and whose authority is often cited in the bowls. The fame of Jesus of Nazareth as a master exorcist induced Jewish magical circles<sup>72</sup> to build up the reputation of Joshua (= 'Jesus') son of Perahya. The Jews were not to be outdone!

According to rabbinic law, if a wife and husband are living

in different localities and the husband wishes to divorce the wife, he has only to send her a bill of divorcement, by mail or by messenger. As soon as she receives it in her hand, she is automatically divorced, even before it is read to her. That is the force of the phrase 'take thy document'. As soon as the lilith has touched it, she has to go.

In Chapter 8 we referred to the custom of expelling a disgraceful woman after stripping her of her clothing and driving her into the street naked (with dishevelled hair). These liliths are so described on being divorced: 'Ye are stripped naked and not clad; your hair is dishevelled'. And there are pictures of liliths being divorced, showing them naked and with their locks of hair flying wildly.

Ancient magic beliefs still persist in our midst. The examples are too numerous and too familiar to warrant listing here. To cite only one widespread example, we may refer to the calling up of ghosts. The modern seance is of a piece with the episode of the Witch of Endor,<sup>73</sup> and can only be regarded as a disreputable heritage from remote antiquity.

Magic may perhaps not be altogether harmful. If a patient believes that a certain harmless pill is doing him good, I should not hold it against a doctor for giving the patient a placebo. But a doctor who would give his patient a placebo while failing to set a broken bone, would be definitely reprehensible.

What should alarm us most is not the survivals of ancient magic but what may be described as neo-magic; that is to say the contribution of our own generation to the long history of quackery. Pseudo-sciences that have no regard for causality are in many cases recognized and licensed by the laws of many of the United States. Thus quack colleges of pseudo-medicine are sanctioned and the health of the citizens is entrusted in part to their graduates on footing similar in kind, if not in degree, with the legitimate medical profession. My former barber in Philadelphia, who had never got through grammar school, received his doctorate after a few months of night school study from a quack medical college chartered by the State of Pennsylvania. He is now licensed to practice medicine on the theory that the various functions of the body are controlled by a series of 'push buttons' on the spine. Such a theory which does not reckon with causality to any ascertainable degree, is essentially magical. This aspect



of modern life is as quaint as anything in the Aramaic bowls.

Human suffering brings about wishful thinking and makes the times riper for a widespread revival of magic. I may venture the prediction that the world is heading for a revival of magic because of the rapid spread of misery. When people lose their loved ones, for example, they are the more conditioned to turn to spiritualism so as to converse with those they love.

The quack always has the advantage over the scientist in that while the scientist can make limited promises, the quack can promise anything from cancer cures to Utopia. In desperate times, he who extends the greatest hope is the most welcome.

I do not go so far as to say that magic has no place in life. As a psychic therapy, it is effective as long as people trust in it. Possibly it is necessary for some people, as a kind of escape mechanism but I see little or no place for it in the lives of rational men and women. However, it is a great factor in life, even at present. The study of this subject, if not an antidote, may at least provide us with an understanding of a living problem.

## Epilogue

AT THE MOMENT they happen, events tend to assume a disproportionate prominence in the immediate vicinity, much as a stone thrown into water produces a local splash. It is the passage of time that sees a widening effect in both cases. Indeed some events become more and more important as time goes on. Thus the invention of the Phoenician alphabet becomes more significant as new nations adopt a form of it and as literacy increases.<sup>74</sup>

Our noblest virtues (as well as our greatest failings) and our material civilization are rooted in the past. We have had occasion to note that our laws, ethics, morals, and religion stem in large measure from the Scriptures. Our superstitions no less than our exact sciences<sup>75</sup> hark back in part to ancient Sumer and Accad. Our material civilization would be unthinkable without the metallurgy and mechanical devices that our ancient predecessors have bequeathed us. The wheel, the spring, the pulley, and countless other fundamental inventions in remote antiquity have made our machine age possible.

The popular notion that the past is dead is simply untrue. The past still lives in us, whether we recognize it or not. We have not come by much of our culture through any ability or effort of our own. If we live in houses instead of caves, it is because of the material progress made in the East thousands of years ago. The working man enjoys a day of rest each week not because he has lifted himself by his bootstraps but because an old Hebrew institution still lives among us. Most of what we live is but a slightly modified inheritance from long ago. To be sure, the contributions of our own age are not to be slighted. Mechanical power and (what to me is far more significant) progress in medicine are great landmarks in culture. But even the greatest discoveries of our age, including the latest nuclear developments, are of less significance than the invention of writing in the fourth millennium B.C.

That the past lives in us will remain true, come what may. It is the study and awareness of the past that hang in the balance. We live in an age when men are divided more dangerously than ever before into hostile camps, as if there were no common ground on which all humanity could meet. But respect for, and



study of, the humanities constitute a priceless common ground. Culture and history unite not only the citizens of one land but nation with nation. The Americas and Europe have in common the traditions of Zion, Athens, and Rome. In repudiating these three basic sources of our culture (and our universities are among the offenders!) we are undermining one of the greatest hopes of the Occident. By putting a ridiculously high premium on 'the present moment in our own back yard' we are destroying a basis for international harmony. I should even go a step farther than those who plead for the conventional classics: since we live in a world with nearly 500,000,000 people in China, with over 450,000,000 in India and Pakistan, and with many other millions of non-Occidental origin, it is only a broad humanistic approach that can ever provide the world with an awareness of the universal humanity that unites all men.

If this book has helped to widen the reader's concept of the human race, chronologically or geographically, it has fulfilled its purpose.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See 'Homer and Bible: The Origin and Character of East Mediterranean Literature', *Hebrew Union College Annual* XXVI, 1955, pp. 43-108.

<sup>2</sup> The journal *Minos* is devoted to Linear B and other Minoan inscriptions.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 of my *Ugaritic Manual*, Rome, 1955.

<sup>4</sup> In all probability, however, 'David' was originally not the man's name but his title. Thus in the pre-Hebraic Mari tablets, *dāwid-* means 'chief'.

<sup>5</sup> The truce line between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, does not follow natural geographical features, nor the ancient divisions of the area.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'Arab' in this book refers to the nomads and peasants I encountered in my field work. What I say about them has very little applicability to the educated, urban class. Among my many intellectual Arab friends, I dare say most are less at home than I am in the Near East deserts and hinterland.

<sup>6a</sup> The problem of the Exodus and Conquest is, to be sure, complicated by their treatment as national epic; see my 'Homer and Bible' §22; and 'Colonies and Enclaves' in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, I, Rome, 1956, p. 418.

<sup>7</sup> Israel is now establishing many colonies in the Negev to secure its Egyptian and Jordanian frontiers and to develop the mineral, petroleum, and agricultural potentialities of the neglected area.

<sup>8</sup> This tablet has played a considerable role in revising the chronology of the ancient Near East. The whole subject is surveyed by S. Moscati, 'Nuovi aspetti della cronologia dell'antico Oriente Anteriore', *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Roma, 4-11 settembre 1955), Volume II (*Storia dell'antichità*), Florence, pp. 169-194 (plus 3 unnumbered pages with charts).

<sup>9</sup> The aim of the Seleucids (particularly Antiochus Epiphanes) was to strengthen the realm by spreading a unifying Hellenistic culture among the various component elements of the population (see C. Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, London, ed. of 1948, p. 66). But what the Seleucids regarded as a programme of civilizing, was tyranny to many of their subjects.

<sup>10</sup> The intelligence staff of eastern armies often reckoned with the institutions of the people they attacked. Thus in 701 B.C., King Sennacherib of Assyria timed his invasion so as to strike Judah at her weakest moment; i.e., in the forty-ninth year (of the jubilee cycle), which is a sabbatical year followed by the fiftieth or 'Jubilee' year: two successive



years when the soil had to lie fallow in accordance with the religious institutions of the land. See *Antiquity* No. 111, Sept. 1954, pp. 187-8.

<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on ritual bathing or baptism in Jewish circles such as the community at Qumran (where baptismal pools have been excavated) favour the alternative that the Beth Sur pools served the same function.

<sup>12</sup> Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*, 2 vol. (New York, 1849) still ranks among the best and most interesting books on the Near East and its archaeology.

<sup>13</sup> For a popular account of Schliemann and his work, see C. W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars*, London, 1952, chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>14</sup> We are, as noted above, nearing a means of exact chronology for relics of organic matter. The Carbon-14 Test gives, within a margin of error, an absolute date for the year in which plant or animal matter ceased living. Tests conducted around 1950 claimed a margin of error limited to 200 years plus or minus; see G. M. Crowfoot, *apud* D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, Oxford, 1955, p. 27. But according to more recent claims, the error can be reduced to a mere thirty-seven years (see G. E. Wright, 'A New Atomic Clock', *Biblical Archaeologist* 17, 1954, p. 47).

<sup>15</sup> Of the many handbooks on the subject, we may single out O. G. S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field*, London, 1953; and M. Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, Oxford, 1954.

<sup>15a</sup> For a comparative study of ancient round houses see M. E. L. Mallowan, *Twenty-five Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*, London, 1956, pp. 3-5.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that the problem of restoring modern Iraq to its former prosperity resolves itself largely into putting the network of ancient canals back into operation. The neglect of those waterways was responsible for the decline of fertile Babylonia into abject desert.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Flinders also had the vision to excavate sites of the Philistines, who were masters of the jeweller's art. The spiritually richer Judeans fell far below the Philistines in art and metallurgy. Accordingly, any Palestinian archaeologist who wants to find rich antiquities will usually do better at Philistine than at Hebrew sites.

<sup>18</sup> This usage is attested in the Nuzu tablets (*Orientalia* 5, 1936, p. 307). For a description of ancient Mesopotamian life, see G. Contenau, *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria*, London 1954; and *La Civilisation d'Assur et de Babylone*, new ed., Paris, 1951. Also W. von Soden's *Herrscher im alten Orient*, Berlin-Göttingen-Heidelberg, 1954, is an excellent popular sketch of Mesopotamian cultural history.

<sup>19</sup> For a bold probing into the potential significance of the ziggurat in Oriental antiquity, see H. G. Quaritch Wales, *The Mountain of God: A study in early religion and kingship*, London, 1953.

<sup>20</sup> Model books on seals are H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, London, 1939; and E. Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections*, Washington (I and II in 1948 and to be continued).

<sup>20a</sup> Another interpretation is possible. The smaller animal may have been intended as reclining and about to rise, in the background. The absence of perspective in ancient art often misleads the modern eye.

<sup>21</sup> See my introductory study on 'Belt-Wrestling in the Bible World' in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23, Part I, 1950-51, pp. 131-6, plates I-V. Numerous other examples remain to be pointed out. Meanwhile we may note that in Genesis 38:18, 25 the three personal possessions of Judah are his seal, belt (*ptil* from the root PTL) and staff. PTL means 'to twist' and the idea of 'belt' is apparently connected with making belts by twisting or interlacing the component strands. The same root PTL means 'to wrestle' in Genesis 30:8 where the name Naphtali (which may well mean 'heroic wrestler') is derived from PTL. There Rachel is represented as saying: "'With mighty strugglings [PTL] have I grappled [PTL] with my sister and prevailed.'" So she called his name Naphtali.' The meaning 'to wrestle, grapple' may not come directly from the idea of 'twisting (i.e., the body)'; it may rather be denominative, from the noun *ptil* 'wrestling belt'.

<sup>22</sup> It is also possible that the Two Deepes refer to the waters (1) above and (2) below. Rain was believed to come from the upper source through opening 'the windows of heaven' (Genesis 7:11). The lower source was the apparent Deep on which the earth rests; this would account for wells and fountains in addition to all the bodies of water on the earth's surface.

<sup>23</sup> Note that the victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil was a widespread concept throughout the Near East long before Zoroastrianism appeared on the scene. Moreover, the form that it took among the ancient Hebrews was part of their pre-Mosaic heritage. It is therefore an error to view Jewish and New Testament dualism as a borrowing from Iranian religion. See *Orientalia* 22, 1953, pp. 243-4.

<sup>24</sup> The personification of Dawn and Dusk appears also in Ugaritic tablet No. 52, which tells of the birth of the two gods bearing those names.

<sup>25</sup> The Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta I (1235-1198 B.C.) is depicted as kneeling before the symbol of the god Nusku (see Von



Soden, *Herrscher im alten Orient*, p. 73, figure 15). The worship of symbols instead of anthropomorphic idols precisely at the traditional date of Moses, is interesting. The ban on idols in the Ten Commandments may be the logical conclusion of a wide-spread trend in certain cults.

<sup>26</sup> Here, too, there are connections with Israel. It was precisely during the Neo-Babylonian period of Exile (sixth century B.C.) that the Jews were for all time purged of idolatry. In pre-Exilic times, their idolatrous backslidings are attested not only by the Biblical prophets but also in the excavations where Astarte figurines are frequently found in Hebrew dwellings (e.g., at Tell Beit Mirsim).

<sup>27</sup> Such commercial colonists helped to spread Mesopotamian civilization throughout the Near East and toward Europe.

<sup>28</sup> 'The New Amarna Tablets', *Orientalia* 16, 1947, pp. 1-21 and plates I-II.

<sup>29</sup> Since the Mesopotamians had not conquered Egypt, the international use of Babylonian in Egypt cannot be ascribed to military expansionism. It was rather the Mesopotamian merchant (called *tamkarum*) and commercial colony that spread Mesopotamian business methods, law, language, and literature all over the ancient world. Sooner or later we can expect to find pre-Amarna cuneiform documents of commercial, legal, and epistolary types in Egypt, perhaps comparable to the Babylonian tablets found at Ugarit (J. Nougayrol, *Palais royal d'Ugarit III*, Paris, 1955).

<sup>30</sup> Several ABC tablets have been found showing that the order of the Ugaritic letters is the same as that in the Phoenician alphabet which reached Western Europe via the Greeks and Romans (C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, Rome, 1955, pp. 11-15). One ABC tablet lists the Ugaritic alphabet with the closest Babylonian syllabic equivalent for each Ugaritic letter (e.g., *g* = GA or *z* = ZI) for the benefit of scribes aspiring to qualify in both scripts.

<sup>31</sup> A. S. Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, Copenhagen, 1952.

<sup>32</sup> U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anat* (in Hebrew), 2nd ed., Jerusalem, 1953.

<sup>33</sup> T. H. Gaster's *Thespis*, New York, 1950, is full of discussion about the religion and pantheon of Ugarit.

<sup>34</sup> Translations of the texts are available in my *Ugaritic Literature*, Rome, 1949. Among the more recent translations of extensive selections, H. L. Ginsberg's (in J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1955, pp. 129-155) deserves special mention. The latest edition and translation is G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh, 1956.

<sup>35</sup> The fertility cycle in the ancient Near East was regarded by the

inhabitants not as seasonal, but 'sabbatical': in seven-year cycles. In Canaan (and in some adjacent areas), seven such cycles formed the forty-nine year Jubilee cycle, climaxed by the fiftieth or Jubilee Year. There is no sterile season in a normally good year in Canaan; all the seasons have their respective harvests of grain or fruit (see my 'Sabbatical Cycle or Seasonal Pattern?', *Orientalia* 22, 1953, pp. 79-81; and *Antiquity* No. 111, 1954, pp. 186-8). Moreover, the god of water (Baal or Yahweh) is associated not only with the winter rains but with the summer dew so that in a normally good year he was regarded as alive and functioning throughout the seasons (*Ugaritic Manual*, pp. 269-70, No. 766).

<sup>36</sup> This is the schematic number designating a large brood. Cf. the seventy sons of Jerubbaal (Judges 9:5), etc., as noted above.

<sup>37</sup> It seems that the beginning of Baal's misfortune entered through the window.

<sup>38</sup> The god of death and sterility.

<sup>39</sup> The struggle between the two gods was recurrent, envisaged as taking place every seven years, to determine whether the new sabbatical cycle would be one of plenty (with Baal victorious) or of dearth (with Mot victorious).

<sup>40</sup> For Ugaritic sociology, see A. van Selms, *Marriage and Family Life in Ugaritic Literature*, London, 1954.

<sup>41</sup> Or 'price'.

<sup>42</sup> The importance of Ugaritic for the study of world literature is delineated in my 'Homer and Bible: The Origin and Character of East Mediterranean Literature', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 26, 1955, pp. 43-108.

<sup>43</sup> Since this spelling (which is used by many first-rate Assyriologists) has been called into question, I wish to point out that the spelling *Nu-zu* actually occurs (*Orientalia* 7, 1938, p. 32); it is not an artificial, modern creation. To be sure, 'Nuzi' and even 'Nuza' can be used by any scholar who prefers them.

<sup>44</sup> It was not only at Corinth and Thebes that the sale of land was prohibited (Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, printing of 1956, New York). Even 'land in Attica did not become alienable until the time of the Peloponnesian War' (J. V. A. Fine, *Horoi, Hesperia Supplement IX*, 1951, p. 206).

<sup>45</sup> Sororarchs also occur in the Old Testament and Ugaritic epics (*Orientalia* 24, 1955, pp. 328-9).

<sup>46</sup> Two volumes of Nuzu texts published by E. R. Lacheman (*Harvard Semitic Series* 14 [1950] and 15 [1955]) cover texts from temple, palace and other official archives. These documents are valuable for the study of religion, government, and warfare.



<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive correlation of the Bible with extra-biblical sources, see my *Introduction to Old Testament Times*, Ventnor, N.J., 1953.

<sup>48</sup> H. Torczyner published the texts first in an English edition: *The Lachish Letters*, Oxford, 1938; and then in a Hebrew edition: *The Lachish Ostraca*, Jerusalem, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> In arid parts of Palestine there are fortunately exceptions; see Chapter 10.

<sup>50</sup> Even the Qumran Isaiah scrolls (copied about two thousand years ago) are about seven centuries later than the Prophet Isaiah, and about five centuries later than 'Second Isaiah'.

<sup>51</sup> Babylonian texts recording rations issued to him, to members of his family, and to other exiles have been discovered; for an English translation, see A. L. Oppenheim in J. B. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1955, p. 308.

<sup>51a</sup> There is, however, another way of interpreting the use of 'Baal' in early Israel. 'Baal' means 'lord' and could therefore refer to the Lord of the Land of Israel as well as of other Canaanite countries. It was only later that the very word 'Baal' became odious in Yahwistic circles, culminating in the extermination of the Baalists by King Jehu of Israel.

<sup>52</sup> The closing words are obscure. The meaning 'something, anything' is based on the reading 'Y DBR'.

<sup>53</sup> This tentative translation is suggested by the use of BKR in Ezekiel 47:12.

<sup>54</sup> The Hebrew word means 'open-eyed' but since the ostraca deal with signals, it is suggested that it refers to the 'signal-spotter'.

<sup>55</sup> Newspaper reports during March 1956 state that Hebrew texts, found in Herod's palace at Masada (destroyed in 73 A.D.), go palaeographically with the Qumran scrolls.

<sup>56</sup> This confirms the position of most scholars, on this topic. 'Before the uniformity of the Old Testament text lies a period of great multiplicity of textual forms—materially of course of the same contents, but like the New Testament material with many variants. The uniformity is the result of the work of the massoretes'. (A. Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament I*, 2nd ed., Copenhagen, 1952, p. 56).

<sup>57</sup> Note that it is also on Habakkuk 2:4 that Paul bases his doctrine of Christian faith; see Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11.

<sup>58</sup> To this day, in Judaism the quorum for communal worship consists of ten adult men.

<sup>59</sup> For a popular introduction to the subject, see E. Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, New York, 1955. For a readable but detailed account, cf. M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, 1955 (with

a long bibliography). E. L. Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University*, Jerusalem, 1955, is a handsome volume full of source material. From the steady stream of books on the Scrolls we may also note T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures in English Translation*, New York, 1956; and J. M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Harmondsworth, 1956.

<sup>60</sup> The best introduction to the Copts is W. H. Worrell, *A Short Account of the Copts*, Ann Arbor, 1946. An excellent bibliography is given by W. C. Till, *Koptische Grammatik*, Leipzig, 1955, pp. 243-53.

<sup>61</sup> Not the least of which was oppressive taxation!

<sup>62</sup> The anecdotes discussed below are published in G. Steindorff, *Koptische Grammatik*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1904, *Chrestomathie*, pp. \*1-\*34.

<sup>63</sup> It will be noted that this word, usually translated 'virgin', cannot mean here what 'virgin' means in English today. There is no word in the Near Eastern languages that by itself means *virgo intacta*; see my *Ugaritic Manual*, p. 249, No. 375.

<sup>64</sup> Some come from Iran; cf. 'Two Magic Bowls in Teheran', *Orientalia* 20, 1951, pp. 306-15.

<sup>65</sup> A complete list of the texts is given in W. H. Rossell, *A Handbook of Aramaic Magical Texts*, Ringwood, N.J., 1953.

<sup>66</sup> A considerable number have migrated to the new State of Israel.

<sup>67</sup> The leading authority on the Mandaeans is my friend, Lady E. S. Drower. See her *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran*, Oxford, 1937, for general orientation. The subject is taking on new and deeper significance as the Dead Sea Scrolls highlight the role of the Mandaeans in the Hellenistic religious background of the early Christians.

<sup>68</sup> The concept of the creative word is familiar from the first chapter of Genesis. The creation is effected neither by work, nor with materials, nor through means of tools. God simply says 'Let there be *x*' and *x* comes into existence.

<sup>69</sup> The left (or 'sinister') side is appropriate for evil; the right is the auspicious side.

<sup>70</sup> The 'Haiti Issue' of *Tomorrow: Quarterly Review of Psychical Research* III, No. 1, New York, 1954, contains nine articles and other items of interest on 'Voodoo', etc.

<sup>71</sup> The Christian bowls also invoke the Old, not the New, Testament; the same holds for Coptic Christian magic as a rule. The cause may be sought in the conservatism of magic. While theology in Christian circles welcomed the New Testament, the magicians were affected but little by the innovation.

<sup>72</sup> Unlike religion, magic does not tend to discredit the claims of other sects. In the older Near East, nobody denied the existence or legitimacy of other men's gods and consequently there was no trace



of atheism in a thoroughly believing world. Gradually exclusivism entered the scene, reaching its apex in the Hebrew Prophets and Psalms where the very existence of other gods was ridiculed. Once men begin to ridicule the existence of other gods, the way is opened to denying the existence of all gods. (A man from country X; who visits country Y and Z, and finds the people of Y denying the gods of Z, and the people of Z denying the gods of Y; is likely to become first an agnostic and then an atheist.) Tolerant magic, unlike intolerant religion, is not its own enemy. It is rather science that encroaches upon magic.

<sup>73</sup> The Bible condemns but does not question the factuality of magic. The reason religion tends to oppose magic is obvious from the Witch of Endor episode. Such witchcraft circumvents religion. At Endor the Witch was the medium between King Saul and the dead Prophet Samuel. Why go to an ordinary priest or prophet, when one can consult the greatest of the ages at Endor?

<sup>74</sup> China is planning to romanize its script so that about 500,000,000 more people will eventually join those who use the alphabet first attested at Ugarit of the Amarna Age.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, Princeton, 1952.

#### POSTSCRIPT ON CARBON-14

During 1956-7 a number of scientists reported through the press that for the older historic periods the Carbon-14 tests may have yielded dates as much as 1,000 years too early. This would reduce the 6000 B.C. date for earliest Jericho to as low as 5000 B.C.

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## ADDENDA

A bibliography of the subjects discussed in this book would fill many books this size. Even the current literature on single topics (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls) is unwieldy. However, because of the special interest in Near East archaeology, a few items selected from the many recent publications may be welcome:

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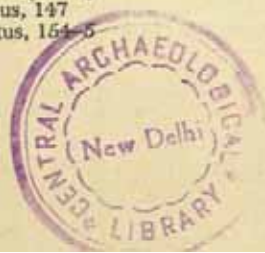


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